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PREFACE.

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In 1810, I put the manuscript of this work, on Germany, into the hands of the bookseller, who had published Corinne. As I maintained in it the same opinions, and preserved the same silence respecting the present, government of the French, which I had done in my former writings, I flattered myself that I should have been permitted to publish this work also: yet, a few days after I had dispatched my manuscript, a decree of a very singular description appeared on the subject of the liberty of the press; it declared "that "no work could be printed without having "been examined by certain censors."—Very

well—it was usual in France, under the old *régime*, for literary works to be submitted to the examination of a public censorship; the tendency of public opinion was then towards the feeling of liberty, which rendered such a restraint, a matter very little to be dreaded; a little article, however, at the end of the new regulation declared, "that when the "censors should have examined a work and "permitted its publication, booksellers should "be authorized to publish it, but that the "Minister of the Police should still have a "right to suppress it altogether, if he should "think fit so to do."—The meaning of which is, that such and such forms should be adopted until it should be thought fit no longer to abide by them: a law was not necessary to decree what was in fact the absence of all law; it would have been better to have relied simply upon the exercise of absolute power.

My bookseller, however, took upon himself the responsibility of the publication of my book, after submitting it to the censors, and thus our contract was made. I came to reside within forty leagues of Paris, to

superintend the printing of the work, and it was upon that occasion that, for the last time, I breathed the air of France. I had, however, abstained in this book, as will be seen, from making any reflections on the political state of Germany: I supposed myself to be writing at the distance of fifty years from the present time; but the present time will not suffer itself to be forgotten. Several of the censors examined my manuscript, they suppressed the different passages which I have now restored and pointed out by notes. With the exception, however, of these passages, they allowed the work to be printed, as I now publish it, for I have thought it my duty to make no alteration in it. It appears to me a curious thing to shew what the work is, which is capable even now in France, of drawing down the most cruel persecution on the head of its author.

At the moment when this work was about to appear, and when the ten thousand copies of the first edition had been actually printed off, the Minister of the Police, well known under the name of General Savary, sent his gensdarmes to the house of the bookseller;

with orders to tear the whole edition in pieces, and to place sentinels at the different entrances to the warehouse, for fear a single copy of this dangerous writing should escape. A commissary of police was charged with the superintendance of this expedition, in which General Savary easily obtained the victory; and the poor commissary, it is said, died of the fatigue he underwent in too minutely assuring himself of the destruction of so great a number of volumes, or rather in seeing them transformed into paper perfectly white, upon which no trace of human reason remained; the price of the paper, valued merely at twenty louis by the police, was the only indemnification which the Bookseller obtained from the Minister.

At the same time that the destruction of my work was going on at Paris, I received in the country an order to deliver up the copy from which it had been printed, and to quit France in four and twenty hours. The conscripts are almost the only persons I know for whom four and twenty hours are considered a sufficient time to prepare for a journey; I wrote, therefore, to the Minister of

the Police that I should require eight days to procure money and my carriage. The following is the letter which he sent me in answer.

GENERAL POLICE,
Minister's Office.

Paris, 3d October, 1810.

"I received, Madam, the letter that you "did me the honour to write to me. Your "son will have apprised you, that I had no "objection to your postponing your depart- "ure for seven or eight days. I beg you "will make that time sufficient for the "arrangements you still have to make, be- "cause I cannot grant you more.

"The cause of the order which I have "signified to you, is not to be looked for in "the silence you have preserved with respect "to the Emperor in your last work; that "would be a mistake; no place could be "found in it worthy of him; but your "banishment is a natural consequence of the "course you have constantly pursued for "some years past. It appeared to me, that

" the air of this country did not agree with
" you, and we are not yet reduced to seek
" for models amongst the people you admire.

" Your last work is not French; it is I
" who have put a stop to the publication of
" it. I am sorry for the loss the Bookseller
" must sustain, but it is not possible for me
" to suffer it to appear.

" You know, Madam, that you were only
" permitted to quit Coppet, because you had
" expressed a desire to go to America. If
" my predecessor suffered you to remain in
" the department of the Loire and the Cher,
" you were not to look upon that indulgence
" as a revocation of the orders which had
" been given with respect to you. At pre-
" sent, you oblige me to cause them to be
" strictly executed, and you have only your-
" self to accuse for it.

" I desire M. Corbigny* to suspend the
" execution of the order I had given him,
" until the expiration of the time I now
" grant you.

* Prefect of the Loire and the Cher.

" I am concerned, Madam, that you have " obliged me to commence my correspon- " dence with you by a measure of severity ; " it would have been more agreeable to me " to have had only to offer you the testimo- " nies of the high consideration with which " I have the honour to be,

Madam,

your very humble and very

obedient Servant,

(Signed.) THE DUKE DE ROVIGO."

Mad. de Stael.

" P.S. I have reasons, Madam, for men- " tioning to you the ports of L'Orient, Laro- " chelle, Bourdeaux, and Rochefort, as be- " ing the only ports at which you can em- " bark; I beg you will let me know which " of them you choose."*

* The object of this Postscript was to forbid me the Ports of the Channel.

I shall subjoin some reflections upon this letter, although it appears to me curious enough in itself. "It appears to me," says General Savary, "that *the air of this country "did not agree with you;*" what a gracious manner of announcing to a women, then, alas! the mother of three children, the daughter of a man who had served France with so much fidelity, that she was banished for ever from the place of her birth, without being suffered, in any manner, to protest against a punishment, esteemed the next in severity to death! There is a French vaudeville, in which a bailiff, boasting of his politeness towards those persons whom he takes to prison, says,

*Aussi je suis aimé de tout ceux que j'arrête.**

I do not know if such were the intention of General Savary.

He adds, that *the French are not reduced to seek for models amongst the people I admire;* these people are the English first, and in many respects the Germans. At all events,

* "So I am loved by all I arrest."

I think I cannot be accused of not loving France. I have shewn but too much sensibility in being exiled from a country where I have so many objects of affection, and where those who are dear to me have such power of entertaining me by their genius! But, notwithstanding this attachment, perhaps too lively, for so brilliant a country, and its ingenious inhabitants, it did not follow that I was to be forbidden to admire England. She has been seen like a knight armed for the defence of social order, preserving Europe, during ten years of anarchy, and ten years more of despotism. Her happy constitution was, at the beginning of the Revolution, the object of the hopes and the efforts of the French. My mind still remains where theirs was then.

. . . . . .

On my return to the estate of my father, the Prefect of Geneva forbad me to go to a greater distance than four leagues from it. I suffered myself one day to go as far as ten leagues, merely for an airing: the gensdarmes immediately pursued me, the postmasters were forbidden to supply me with horses, and it would have appeared as if the safety

of the state depended on such a weak being as myself. However, I still submitted to this imprisonment in all its severity, when a last blow rendered it quite insupportable to me. Some of my friends were banished, because they had had the generosity to come and see me—this was too much—to carry with oneself the contagion of misfortune, not to dare to associate with those one loves, to be affraid to write to them, or pronounce their names, to be the object by turns, either of affectionate attentions which make one tremble for those who shew them, or of those refinements of baseness which terror inspires, is a situation from which every one, who values life, would withdraw!

I was told, as a means of softening my grief, that these continual persecutions were a proof of the importance that was attached to me; I could have answered that I had not deserved

"*Ni cet excés d'honneur, ni cette indignité;*" *

but I never suffered myself to look to consolations addressed to my vanity; for I knew

* "Neither this excess of honour, nor this unworthy treatment."

that there was no one then in France, from the highest to the lowest, who might not have been found worthy of being made unhappy. I was tormented in all the concerns of my life, in all the tender points of my character, and power condescended to take the trouble of becoming well acquainted with me, in order the more effectually to enhance my sufferings. Not being able then to disarm that power by the simple sacrifice of my talents, and resolved not to employ them in its service, I seemed to feel, to the bottom of my heart, the advice my father had given me, and I left my paternal home.

I think it my duty to make this calumniated book known to the public—this book, the source of so many troubles; and, though General Savary told me in his letter, that my work *was not French*, as I certainly shall not allow him to be the representative of France, it is to Frenchmen such as I have known them, that I should with confidence address a work, in which I have endeavoured, to the best of my abilities, to heighten the glory of the works of the human mind.

Germany may be considered, from its geographical situation, as the heart of Europe, and the great association of the Continent can never recover its independence but by means of that country. Difference of language, natural boundaries, the recollections of a common history, contribute all together to give birth to those great individual existences of mankind, which we call nations; certain proportions are necessary to their existence, they are distinguished by certain qualities; and, if Germany were united to France, the consequence would be, that France would also be united to Germany, and the Frenchmen of Hamburg, like the Frenchmen of Rome, would by degrees effect a change in the character of the countrymen of Henry the Fourth: the vanquished would in time modify the victors, and in the end both would be losers.

I have said in my work that the Germans *were not a nation;* assuredly, they are at this moment most heriocally disproving that assertion. But, nevertheless, do we not still see some German countries expose themselves by fighting against their countrymen,

to the contempt even of their allies, the French? those auxiliaries (whose names we hesitate to pronounce, as if it were not yet too late to conceal them from posterity)—those auxiliaries, I say, are not led either by opinion or even by interest, still less by honour; but a blind fear has precipitated their governments towards the strongest side, without reflecting that they were themselves the cause of that very strength before which they bowed.

The Spaniards, to whom we may apply Southey's beautiful line,

"And those who suffer bravely save mankind;"

the Spaniards have seen themselves reduced to the possession of Cadiz alone; but they were no more ready then to submit to the yoke of strangers, than they are now when they have reached the barrier of the Pyrenees, and are defended by that man of an ancient character and a modern genius, Lord Wellington. But to accomplish these great things, a perseverance was necessary, which would not be discouraged by events. The Germans have frequently fallen into the

error of suffering themselves to be overcome by reverses. Individuals ought to submit to destiny, but nations never; for, it is they who can alone command destiny; with a little more exertion of the will, misfortune would be conquered.

The submission of one people to another is contrary to nature. Who would now believe in the possibility of subduing Spain, Russia, England, or France?—Why should it not be the same with Germany?—If the Germans could be subjugated, their misfortune would rend the heart; but still we should be tempted to say to them as Mlle. de Mancini said to Louis XIV. *you are a king, sire, and you weep*—you are a nation, and you weep!!

The picture of literature and philosophy, seems indeed foreign from the present moment; yet it will be grateful, perhaps, to this poor and noble Germany, to recal the memory of its intellectual riches amidst the ravages of war. It is three years since I designated Prussia, and the countries of the north which surround it, as *the country of*

thought; into how many noble actions has this thought been transformed! That to which the systems of Philosophers led the way is coming to pass, and the independence of mind is about to lay the foundation of the independence of nations.

OF GERMANY.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE origin of the principal nations of Europe may be traced to three great distinct families: the Latin, the German, and the Sclavonic. The Italians, the French, the Spaniards, and the Portuguese, have derived their civilization and their language from Rome; the German, the Swiss, the English, the Swedes, the Danes, and the Hollanders are of Teutonic race: the Poles and Russians occupy the first rank among those of the Sclavonic. Those nations whose intellectual culture is of Latin origin were the earliest civilized; they have for the most part inherited the quick sagacity of the Romans in the conduct of worldly affairs. Social institutions, founded on the Pagan religion, preceded among them the establish-

ment of Christianity; and when the people of the North came to conquer them, those very people adopted, in many respects, the customs of the countries which they conquered.

These observations must no doubt be modified by reference to climates, governments, and the facts of each individual history. The ecclesiastical power has left indelible traces in Italy. Their long wars with the Arabs have strengthened the military habits and enterprising spirit of the Spaniards; but, generally speaking, all this part of Europe, of which the languages are derived from the Latin, and which was early initiated in the Roman policy, bears the character of a long-existing civilization of Pagan origin. The people of those regions evince less propensity to abstract reflection than we find among the German nations; they are more addicted to the pleasures and the interests of the earth; and, like their founders, the Romans, they alone know how to practise the arts of dominion.

The Germanic nations almost constantly resisted the Roman yoke; they were more lately civilized, and by Christianity alone; they passed instantaneously from a sort of barbarism to the refinement of Christian inter-

course; the times of chivalry, the spirit of the middle ages, form their most lively recollections; and, although the learned of these countries have studied the Greek and Latin authors more deeply even than the Latin nations themselves, the genius natural to German writers is of a colour rather Gothic than classical. Their imagination disports itself in old towers and battlements, among knights, sorceresses, and spectres; and mysteries of a thoughtful and solitary nature form the principal charm of their poetry.

The analogy which subsists among all the Teutonic nations is such as cannot be mistaken. The social dignity for which the English are indebted to their constitution assures to them, it is true, a decided superiority over the rest; nevertheless, the same touches of character are constantly to be met with among all the different people of Germanic origin. They were all distinguished, from the earliest times, by their independence and loyalty; they have ever been good and faithful; and it is for that very reason, perhaps, that their writings universally bear a melancholy impression; for it often happens to

nations, as to individuals, to suffer for their virtues.

The civilization of the Sclavonic tribes having been of much later date and of more rapid growth than that of other people, there has been hitherto seen among them more of imitation than of originality; all that they possess of European growth is French; what they have derived from Asia is not yet sufficiently developed to enable their writings to display the true character which would be natural to them. Throughout literary Europe, then, there are but two great divisions strongly marked: the learning which is imitated from the ancients, and that which owes its birth to the spirit of the middle ages; that which in its origin received from the genius of Paganism its colour and its charm, and that which owes its impulse and developement to a religion intrinsically spiritual.

It might be said with reason that the French and the Germans are at the two extremes of the moral chain; since the former regard all ideas as moving from exterior objects; the latter, all impressions as proceeding from pre-conceived ideas. These two nations,

nevertheless, agree together pretty well in their social relations; but none can be more opposite in their literary and philosophical systems. Intellectual Germany is hardly known to France: very few men of letters among us have troubled themselves about her. It is true that a much greater number have set themselves up for her judges. This agreeable lightness, which makes men pronounce on matters of which they are ignorant, may appear elegant in talking, but not in writing. The Germans often run into the error of introducing into conversation that which is fit only for books; the French sometimes commit the contrary fault, of inserting in books that which is pardonable only in conversation; and we have so exhausted all that is superficial, that, were it only for ornament, and, above all, for the sake of variety, it seems to me that it would be well to try something deeper.

For these reasons I believed that there might be some advantage in making known that country in which, of all Europe, study and meditation have been carried so far, that it may be considered as the native land of thought. The reflections which the country

itself and its literary works have suggested to me shall be divided into four sections. The first will treat of Germans and the Manners of the Germans; the second, of Literature and the Arts; the third, of Philosophy and Morals; the fourth, of Religion and Enthusiasm. These different subjects necessarily fall into one another. The national character has its influence on the literature; the literature and the philosophy on the religion; and the whole taken together can only make each distinct part properly intelligible: it was necessary notwithstanding to submit to an apparent division, in order ultimately to collect all the rays in the same focus.

I do not conceal from myself that I am about to expose, in literature as well as in philosophy, opinions foreign to those which reign in France; but, let them appear just or not, let them be adopted or combated, they will, at all events, yield scope for reflection. "We need not, I imagine, wish to "encircle the frontiers of literary France with "the great wall of China, to prevent all ex- "terior ideas from penetrating within."*

* These commas are used to mark the passages which the censors of Paris require to be suppressed. In the second

It is impossible that the German writers, the best informed and most reflecting men in Europe, should not deserve a moment's attention to be bestowed on their literature and their philosophy. It is objected to the one, that it is not in good taste; to the other, that it is full of absurdities. It is possible, however, that there may be a species of literature not conformable to our laws of good taste, and that it may nevertheless contain new ideas, which, modified after our manner, would tend to enrich us. It is thus that we are indebted for Racine to the Greeks, and to Shakspeare for many of the tragedies of Voltaire. The sterility with which our literature is threatened may make it be believed that the French spirit itself has need of being renewed by a more vigorous sap; and since the elegance of society will always

volume they discovered nothing reprehensible; but the chapters on Enthusiasm in the third, and, above all, the concluding paragraph of the work, did not meet their approbation. I was ready to submit to their censures in a negative manner; that is to say, by retrenching without making any further additions; but the *gendarmes* sent by the Minister of Police, executed the office of censors in a more brutal manner, by tearing the whole book in pieces.

preserve us from certain faults, it is of the utmost importance to us, to find again this source of superior beauties.

After having rejected the literature of the Germans in the name of good taste, we think that we may also get rid of their philosophy in the name of reason. Good taste and reason are words which it is always pleasant to pronounce, even at random; but can we in earnest persuade ourselves that writers of immense erudition, who are as well acquainted with all the French books as ourselves, have been employed for these twenty years upon mere absurdities?

In the age of superstition, all new opinions are naturally accused of impiety; and in the days of incredulity, they are, not less naturally, charged with being absurd. In the sixteenth century, Galileo was delivered up to the Inquisition for having said that the world went round; and in the eighteenth, some persons wished to make J. J. Rousseau pass for a fanatical devotee. Opinions which differ from the ruling spirit, be that what it may, always scandalize the vulgar: study and examination can alone confer that liberality of judgment, without which it is im-

possible to acquire new lights, or even to preserve those which we have. For we submit ourselves to certain received ideas, not as to truths, but as to power; and it is thus that human reason habituates itself to servitude, even in the field of literature and philosophy.

PART I.

OF GERMANY,

AND

THE MANNERS OF THE GERMANS.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Aspect of Germany.

THE number and extent of forests indicate a civilization yet recent: the ancient soil of the south is almost unfurnished of its trees, and the sun darts its perpendicular rays on the earth which has been laid bare by man. Germany still affords some traces of unin-

habited nature. From the Alps to the sea, between the Rhine and the Danube, you behold a land covered with oaks and firs, intersected by rivers of an imposing beauty, and by mountains of a most picturesque aspect; but vast heaths and sands, roads often neglected, a severe climate, shed at first a gloom over the mind; nor is it till after some time that it discovers what may attach us to such a country.

The south of Germany is highly cultivated; yet in the most delightful districts of this country there is always something of seriousness, which calls the imagination rather to thoughts of labour than of pleasure, rather to the virtues of the inhabitants than to the charms of nature.

The ruins of strong castles which are seen on the heights of the mountains, houses built of mud, narrow windows, the snows which during winter cover the plains as far as the eye can reach, all these cause a painful impression on the mind. I know not what of silentness in nature and in the human race at first oppresses the heart. It seems as if time moved more slowly there than elsewhere, as if vegetation made not a more rapid progress

in the earth than ideas in the minds of men, and as if the regular furrows of the labourer were there traced upon a thankless soil.

Nevertheless, when we have overcome these first unreflecting sensations, the country and its inhabitants offer to the observation something at once interesting and poetical; we feel that gentle souls and tender imaginations have embellished these fields. The high roads are planted with fruit trees for the refreshment of the traveller. The landscapes which surround the Rhine are every where magnificent; this river may be called the tutelary genius of Germany; his waves are pure, rapid, and majestic, like the life of a hero of antiquity. The Danube divides itself into too many branches; the streams of the Elbe and Spree are disturbed too easily by the tempests; the Rhine only is unchangeable. The countries through which it flows appear at once of a character so grave and so diversified, so fruitful and so solitary, that one would be tempted to believe that they owe their cultivation to the genius of the river alone, and that man is as nothing to them. Its tide, as it flows along, relates the high deeds of the days of old, and the shade of

Arminius seems still to wander on its precipitous shores.

The monuments of Gothic antiquity only are remarkable in Germany; these monuments recal the ages of chivalry: in almost every town a public museum preserves the records of those days. One would say, that the inhabitants of the north, conquerors of the world, when they quitted Germany, left behind memorials of themselves under different forms, and that the whole land resembles the residence of some great people long since left vacant by its possessors. In most of the arsenals of German towns, we meet with figures of knights in painted wood, clad in their armour; the helmet, the buckler, the cuisses, the spurs, all according to ancient custom; and we walk among these standing dead, who with uplifted arms seem ready to strike their adversaries, and hold their lances in the rest. This motionless image of actions, formerly so lively, occasions an impression of pain. It is thus that, long after earthquakes, the bodies of men have been discovered still fixed in the same attitudes, in the action of the same thoughts, that occupied them at the instant when they were swallowed up.

Modern architecture in Germany offers nothing to our contemplation worthy of being recorded; but the towns are in general well built, and are embellished by the proprietors with a good-natured care. In many, the houses are painted on the outsides with various colours; one sees upon them the figures of saints, and ornaments of every description; which, though assuredly not the most correct in taste, yet cause a cheerful variety, and seem to indicate a benevolent desire to please both their fellow-countrymen and strangers. The dazzling splendour of a palace gratifies the self-love of its possessors; but the well-designed and carefully-finished decorations, which set off these little dwellings, have something in them kind and hospitable.

The gardens are almost as beautiful in some parts of Germany as in England; the luxury of gardens always implies a love of the country. In England, simple mansions are often built in the middle of the most magnificent parks; the proprietor neglects his dwelling to attend to the ornaments of nature. This magnificence and simplicity united do not, it is true, exist in the same

degree in Germany; yet, in spite of the want of wealth and the pride of feudal dignity, there is every where to be remarked a certain love of the beautiful, which, sooner or later, must be followed by taste and elegance, of which it is the only real source. Often, in the midst of the superb gardens of the German princes, are placed Æolian harps close by grottos encircled with flowers, that the wind may waft the sound and the perfume together. The imagination of the northern people thus endeavours to create for itself a sort of Italy; and, during the brilliant days of a short-lived summer, it sometimes attains the deception it seeks.

CHAPTER II.

On the Manners and Character of the Germans.

THE whole German nation can be made to agree in some principal features only; for the diversities of this country are such, that it is difficult to bring together under one point of view, religions, governments, climates, and even people so different. Southern Germany is, in very many respects, quite distinct from the northern; the commercial cities are altogether unlike those which are the seats of universities; the small states differ sensibly from the two great monarchies of Prussia and Austria. Germany was lately an aristocratical confederation; an empire without one common centre of intelligence and of public spirit; it did

not form a compact nation, and the bond of union was wanting to its separate members. This division of Germany, fatal to her political force, was nevertheless very favourable to all the efforts of genius and imagination. In matters of literary and metaphysical opinion, there was a sort of gentle and peaceful anarchy, which allowed to every man the complete development, of his own individual powers of perception.

As there is no capital city in which all the good company of Germany finds itself united, the spirit of society exerts but little power; and the empire of taste and the arms of ridicule are equally without influence. Most writers and reasoners sit down to work in solitude, or surrounded only by a little circle over which they reign. They abandon themselves, one by one, to all the impulses of an unrestrained imagination; and if any traces are to be found throughout Germany of the ascendency of fashion, it is in the desire evinced by every man to shew himself in all respects different from the rest. In France, on the contrary, every man aspires to deserve what Montesquieu said of Voltaire; *Il a plus que personne l'esprit que tout le*

monde a. The German writers would yet more willingly imitate foreigners than their own countrymen.

In literature, as in politics, the Germans have too much respect for foreigners, and not enough of national prejudices. In individuals it is a virtue, this denial of self, and this esteem of others; but the patriotism of nations ought to be selfish. The pride of the English conduces powerfully to their political existence; the good opinion which the French entertain of themselves has always contributed greatly to their ascendance over Europe; the noble pride of the Spaniards formerly rendered them sovereigns of one entire portion of the world. The Germans are Saxons, Prussians, Bavarians, Austrians; but the Germanic character, on which the strength of all should be founded, is, like the land itself, parcelled out among so many different masters.

I shall separately examine northern and southern Germany; but will for the present confine myself to those reflections which equally suit the whole nation. The Germans are, generally speaking, both sincere and faithful; they seldom forfeit their word, and

deceit is foreign to them. If this fault should ever introduce itself into Germany, it could only be through the ambition of imitating foreigners, of evincing an equal dexterity, and, above all, of not being duped by them; but good sense and goodness of heart would soon bring the Germans back to perceive that their strength consists in their own nature, and that the habit of rectitude renders us incapable, even where we are willing, of employing artifice. In order to reap the fruits of immorality, it is necessary to be entirely light armed, and not to carry about you a conscience and scruples which arrest you midway, and make you feel, so much the more poignant, the regret of having left the old road, as it is impossible for you to advance boldly in the new.

It is, I believe, easy to shew that, without morality, all is danger and darkness. Nevertheless there has often been observed among the Latin nations a singularly dextrous policy in the art of emancipating themselves from every duty; but, it may be said, to the glory of the German nation, that she is almost incapable of that practised suppleness which makes all truths bend to all interests, and sa-

crifices every engagement to every calculation. Her defects, as well as her good qualities, subject her to the honourable necessity of justice.

The power of labour and reflection is also one of the distinctive features of the people of Germany. They are naturally a literary and philosophical people; yet the separation into classes, which is more distinct in Germany than any where else, because society does not soften its gradations, is in some respects injurious to the understanding properly so called. The nobles have too few ideas, the men of letters too little practice in business. Understanding is a combination of the knowledge of men and things; and society, in which men act without object and yet with interest, is precisely that which best develops the most opposite faculties. It is imagination more than intellect that characterizes the Germans. I. P. Richter, one of their most distinguished writers, has said *that the empire of the seas belongs to the English, that of the land to the French, and that of the air to the Germans*: in fact, we discover in Germany, the necessity of a centre and bounds to this eminent faculty of thought, which rises and loses

itself in vacuum, which penetrates and vanishes in obscurity, which perishes by its impartiality, confounds itself by the force of analysis, and stands in need of certain faults to circumscribe its virtues.

In leaving France, it is difficult to grow accustomed to the sluggish inertness of the German people; they never hasten to any object; they find obstacles to all; you hear "*it is impossible*" repeated a hundred times in Germany for once in France. When action is necessary, the Germans know not how to struggle with difficulties; and their respect for power is more owing to their resemblance between power and destiny, than to any interested motive. The lower classes are sufficiently coarse in their forms of proceeding; above all, when any shock is intended to their favourite habits; they would naturally feel much more than the nobles that holy antipathy for foreign manners and languages, which in all countries seem to strengthen the national bond of union. The offer of money does not alter their plan of conduct; fear does not turn them aside from it; they are, in short, very capable of that fixedness in all things, which is an excellent

pledge for morality: for he who is continually actuated by fear, and still more by hope, passes easily from one opinion to another, whenever his interest requires it.

As we rise a little above the lower class, we easily perceive that internal vivacity, that poetry of the soul, which characterizes the Germans. The inhabitants of town and country, the soldiers and labourers, are all acquainted with music. It has happened to me to enter small cottages blackened by the smoke of tobacco, and immediately to hear not only the mistress but the master of the house playing voluntaries on the harpsichord, like the Italian *improvisatori* in verse. Almost every where, upon market-days, they have players on wind instruments placed in the balcony of the town-house which overlooks the public square; the peasants of the neighbourhood are thus made partakers in the soft enjoyment of that first of arts. The scholars walk through the streets singing psalms in chorus. They say that Luther often took a part in these chorusses in early life. I was at Eisenach, a little town in Saxony, one winter day, when it was so cold that the very streets were blocked up

with snow; I saw a long procession of young people in black cloaks, walking through the town, and celebrating the praises of God. They were the only persons out of doors; for the severity of the frost had driven all the rest of the world to their fire-sides; and these voices, almost equally harmonious with those of the south, heard amidst all this rigour of the season, excited so much the livelier emotion. The inhabitants of the town dared not in the intense cold to open their windows; but we could perceive behind the glasses, countenances, sad or serene, young or old, all receiving with joy the religious consolations which this sweet melody inspired.

The poor Bohemians, as they wander, followed by their wives and children, carry on their backs a bad harp, made of common wood, from which they draw harmonious music. They play upon it while they rest at the foot of a tree on the high road, or near the post houses, trying to awaken the attention of travellers to the ambulatory concert of their little wandering family. In Austria, the flocks are kept by shepherds, who play charming airs on instruments at

once simple and sonorous. These airs agree perfectly well with the soft and pensive impression produced by the aspect of the country.

Instrumental music is as generally cultivated throughout Germany as vocal music in Italy. Nature has done more in this respect, as in so many others, for Italy, than for Germany; for instrumental music labour is necessary, while a southern sky is enough to create a beautiful voice: nevertheless the men of the working classes would never be able to afford to music the time which is necessary for acquiring it, if they were not endowed with organs peculiarly adapted to the acquirement. Those people, who are musicians by nature, receive through the medium of harmony sensations and ideas, which their confined situations and vulgar occupations could never procure for them from any other source.

The female peasants and servants, who have not money enough to spend in dress, ornament their heads and arms with a few flowers, that imagination may at least have some part in their attire: those who are a little more rich wear on holidays a cap of

gold stuff, in sufficiently bad taste, which affords a stranger contrast to the simplicity of the rest of their costume; but this cap, which their mothers also wore before them, seems to recal ancient manners; and the dress of ceremony, with which the lower classes of women pay respect to the Sunday, has something solemn in it which interests one in their favour.

The Germans deserve credit also for the sincerity testified in their respectful acts of reverence, and their formal sanctity which foreigners have so often turned into ridicule. They might easily have substituted a cold and indifferent deportment for that grace and elegance, which they are accused of being unable to reach; disdain always silences ridicule; for it is principally upon useless efforts that ridicule attaches itself; but benevolent characters choose rather to expose themselves to pleasantry, than to preserve themselves from it by that haughty air of restraint, which it is so easy for any person to assume.

In Germany, we are continually struck by the contrast which exists between sentiments and habits, talents and tastes; civilization and nature seem to be not yet

sufficiently amalgamated together. Sometimes the most ingenuous of men are very affected in their expressions and countenance, as if they had something to conceal: sometimes, on the other hand, gentleness of soul does not prevent the rudeness of manners: frequently even this contradiction goes still further, and absolute weakness of character shews itself through the veil of harshness in language and demeanour. An enthusiastic passion for the fine arts and for poetry is joined to habits even low and vulgar in social life. There is no country where young men, studying at the Universities, are better acquainted with the ancient languages and with antiquity: yet there is none in which superannuated customs more generally exist even at the present day. The recollections of Greece, the taste for the fine arts, seem to have reached them through the medium of correspondence; but, feudal institutions, and the ancient customs of the German nation, are always held in honour among them, even though, unhappily for the military power of the country, they no longer possess the same strength.

There is no assemblage more whimsical than that displayed in the military aspect of

Germany: soldiers at every step, and all leading a sort of domestic life. They are as much afraid of fatigue and of the inclemency of the air, as if the whole nation were composed of merchants and men of letters; and yet all their institutions tend, and must necessarily tend, to inspire the people with military habits. When the inhabitants of the north brave the inconveniencies of their climate, they harden themselves in a wonderful manner against all sorts of evil; the Russian soldier is a proof of this. But where the climate is only half rigourous, where it is still possible to guard against the severity of the heavens by domestic precautions, these very precautions render them more alive to the physical sufferings of war.

Stoves, beer, and the smoke of tobacco, surround all the common people of Germany with a thick and hot atmosphere, from which they are never inclined to escape. This atmosphere is injurious to activity, which is of no less importance in war than courage itself; resolutions are slow, discouragement easy, because an existence, void of pleasure in general, inspires no great confidence in

the gifts of fortune. The habit of a peaceable and regular mode of life is so bad a preparation for the multiplied chances of hazard, that even death, coming in a regular way, appears preferable to a life of adventure.

The demarcation of classes, much more positive in Germany than it used to be in France, produced the annihilation of military spirit among the lower orders; this separation has in fact nothing offensive in it; for I repeat, a sort of natural goodness mixes itself with every thing in Germany, even with aristocratical pride: and the differences of rank are reduced to some court privileges, to some assemblies which do not afford sufficient pleasure to deserve envy: nothing is bitter, under whatever aspect contemplated, when society, and ridicule, which is the offspring of society, is without influence. Men cannot really wound their very souls, except by falsehood or mockery: in a country of seriousness and truth, justice and happiness will always be met with. But the barrier which separated, in Germany, the nobles from the citizens, necessarily rendered the whole nation less warlike.

Imagination, which is the ruling quality of the world of arts and letters in Germany, inspires the fear of danger, if this natural movement is not combated by the ascendancy of opinion, and the exaltation of honour. In France, even in its ancient state, the taste for war was universal; and the common people willingly risked their life for the purpose of gratifying it. It is a question of importance to know if the domestic affections, the habit of reflection, the very gentleness of soul, do not conduce to the fear of death; but if the whole strength of a state consists in its military spirit, it is of consequence to examine what are the causes that have weakened this spirit in the German nation.

Three leading motives usually incite men to fight; the patriotic love of liberty, the enthusiasm of glory, and religious fanaticism. There can be no great patriotism in an empire divided for so many ages, where Germans fought against Germans, almost always instigated by some foreign impulse: the love of glory is scarcely awake where there is no centre, no capital, no society. That species of impartiality, the very excess of justice, which characterizes the Germans, renders

them much more susceptible of being inflamed with abstract sentiments, than of the real interests of life; the general, who loses a battle, is more sure of indulgence, than he who gains one is of applause; there is not enough difference between success and reverse, in the opinions of such a people, to excite any very lively ambition.

Religion, in Germany, exists at the very bottom of the heart; but it possesses there a character of thought and independence, which breathes nothing of the energy necessary to exclusive sentiments. The same independence of opinions, individuals, and states, so prejudicial to the strength of the Germanic empire, is to be found also in their religion: a great number of different sects divide Germany between them; and the Catholic religion itself, which, in its very nature, exercises an uniform and strict discipline, is nevertheless interpreted by every man after his own fashion. The political and social bond of the people, a general government, a general worship, the same laws, the same interests, a classical literature, a ruling opinion, nothing of all this exists among the Germans; each individual state is the more independent, each

individual science the better cultivated; but the whole nation is so subdivided, that one cannnot tell to what part of the empire this very name of nation ought to be granted.

The love of liberty is not developed among the Germans; they have not learned, either by enjoyment or by privation, the value which may be attached to it. There are many examples of federative governments, which give to the public spirit as much force as even an united administration, but these are the associations of equal states and free citizens. The German confederacy was composed of strong and weak, citizen and serf, of rivals, and even of enemies; they were old existing elements, combined by circumstances and respected by men.

The nation is persevering and just; and its equity and loyalty secure it against injury from any institution, however vicious. Louis of Bavaria, when he took the command of the army, entrusted to Frederic the Fair, his rival, and at that time his prisoner, the administration of his states; and he had not to repent of this confidence, which in those days caused no astonishment. With such virtues, they never found the ill consequences of the

weakness, or even the complication of the laws; the probity of individuals supplied their defects.

The very independence which the Germans enjoyed, in almost all respects, rendered them indifferent to liberty; independence is a possession; liberty, its security; and on this very account nobody in Germany was molested either in his rights or his enjoyments: they could not feel the want of such an order of things as might secure them in the possession of this happiness. The imperial tribunals promised a sure though slow redress of every act of arbitrary power; and the moderation of the sovereigns, and the wisdom of the governed, seldom gave room for any appeals to their interference: people, therefore, could not imagine that they stood in need of constitutional fortifications, when they saw no aggressors.

One has reason to be astonished, that the feudal code should have subsisted almost unaltered among a people so enlightened; but as, in the execution of these laws, so defective in themselves, there was never any injustice, the equality with which they were applied, made amends for their inequality

in principle. Old charters, the ancient privileges of every city—all that family history, which constitutes the charm and glory of little states, were singularly dear to the Germans; but they neglected that great national might, which it was so important to have founded among the colossal states of Europe.

The Germans, with some few exceptions, are hardly capable of succeeding in any thing which requires address and dexterity; every thing molests and embarrasses them, and they have as much need of method in action as of independence in ideas. The French, on the contrary, consider actions with all the freedom of art, and ideas with all the bondage of custom. The Germans, who cannot endure the yoke of rules in literature, require every thing to be traced out before them in the line of their conduct. They know not how to treat with men; and the less occasion is given them in this respect to decide for themselves, the better they are satisfied.

Political institutions can alone form the character of a nation; the nature of the government of Germany was almost in opposition to the philosophical illumination of the Germans. From thence it follows, that

they join the greatest boldness of thought to the most obedient character. The pre-eminence of the military states, and the distinctions of rank, have accustomed them to the most exact submission in the relations of social life. Obedience, with them, is regularity, not servility; they are as scrupulous in the execution of the orders they receive, as if every order became a duty.

The enlightened men of Germany dispute vehemently among themselves the dominion of hypothesis, and will suffer no shackles in this department; but they give up, without difficulty, all that is real in life to the powerful of the earth. "This reality, which they "so much despise, finds purchasers, however, "who in the end avail themselves of their "acquisition to carry trouble and constraint "into the empire of the imagination itself." * The understanding and the character of the Germans appear to have no communication together: the one cannot suffer any limits, the other is subject to every yoke; the one is very enterprising—the other, very timid: in short, the illumination of the one seldom

* A passage suppressed by the censors.

gives strength to the other, and this is easily explained. The extension of knowledge in former times only serves to weaken the character, when it is not strengthened by the habit of business and the exercise of the will. To see all, and comprehend all, is a great cause of uncertainty; and the energy of action develops itself only in those free and powerful countries where patriotic sentiments are to the soul like blood to the veins, and grow cold only with the extinction of life itself.*

* I have no need to say that it is England which I wished to point out by these words; but when proper names are not pronounced, the censors, in general, who are men of knowledge, take a pleasure in not comprehending. It is not the same with the police; the police has a sort of instinct that is really extraordinary, in prejudice of all liberal ideas, under whatever form they present themselves; and traces out, with the sagacity of a good hound, all that might awaken in the minds of the French their ancient love for the progress of light and liberty.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Women.

NATURE and society give to women a habit of endurance; and I think it can hardly be denied that, in our days, they are generally worthier of moral esteem than the men. At an epoch when selfishness is the prevailing evil, the men, to whom all positive interests have relation, must necessarily have less generosity, less sensibility, than the women. These last are attached to life only by the ties of the heart; and even when they lose themselves, it is by sentiment that they are led away: their selfishness is extended to a double object, while that of man has himself only for its end. Homage is rendered to them according to the affections which they

inspire; but those which they bestow are almost always sacrifices. The most beautiful of virtues, self-devotion, is their enjoyment and their destiny; no happiness can exist for them but by the reflection of another's glory and prosperity: in short, to live independently of self, whether by ideas or by sentiments, or, above all, by virtues, gives to the soul an habitual feeling of elevation.

In those countries where men are called upon by political institutions to the exercise of all the military and civil virtues which are inspired by patriotism, they recover the superiority which belongs to them; they re-assume with dignity their rights, as masters of the world: but when they are condemned, in whatever measure, to idleness or to slavery, they fall so much the lower as they ought to rise more high. The destiny of women always remains the same; it is their soul alone which creates it: political circumstances have no influence upon it. When men are either ignorant or incapable of the means of employing their lives with dignity and propriety, Nature revenges herself upon them for the very gifts which they have received from her; the activity of the

body contributes only to the sloth of the mind; the strength of soul degenerates into coarseness; and the day is consumed in vulgar sports and exercises, horses, the chase, or entertainments, which might be suitable enough in the way of relaxation, but seem merely degrading as occupations. Women, the while, cultivate their understanding; and sentiment and reflection preserve in their souls the image of all that is free and generous.

The German women have a charm exclusively their own—a touching voice, fair hair, a dazzling complexion; they are modest, but less timid than Englishwomen: one sees that they have been less accustomed to meet with their superiors among men, and that they have besides less to apprehend from the severe censures of the public. They endeavour to please by their sensibility—to interest by their imagination; the language of poetry and the fine arts are familiar to them; they coquet with enthusiasm, as they do in France with wit and pleasantry. That perfect loyalty, which distinguishes the German character, renders love less dangerous to the happiness of women; and, perhaps, they admit the

advances of this sentiment with the more confidence, as it is invested with romantic colours; and disdain and infidelity are less to be dreaded there than elsewhere.

Love is a religion in Germany, but a poetical religion, which tolerates too easily all that sensibility can excuse. It cannot be denied, that the facility of divorce in the Protestant states is prejudicial to the sacredness of marriage. They change husbands with as little difficulty as if they were arranging the incidents of a drama; the good-nature common both to men and women is the reason that so little bitterness of spirit ever accompanies these easy ruptures; and, as the Germans are endowed with more imagination than real passion, the most extravagant events take place with singular tranquillity: nevertheless, it is thus that manners and character lose every thing like consistency; the spirit of paradox shakes the most sacred institutions, and there are no fixed rules upon any subject.

One may fairly laugh at the ridiculous airs of some German women, who are continually exalting themselves even to a pitch of affectation, and who sacrifice to their pretty

softnesses of expression, all that is marked and striking in mind and character: they are not open, even though they are not false; they only see and judge of nothing correctly, and real events pass like a phantasmagoria before their eyes. Even when they take it into their heads to be light and capricious, they still retain a tincture of that *sentimentality*, which is held in so high honour in their country. A German woman said one day, with a melancholy expression, "I know not wherefore; but those who are absent pass away from my soul." A French woman would have rendered this idea with more gaiety: but it would have been fundamentally the same.

Notwithstanding these impertinencies, which form only the exception, there are among the women of Germany numbers whose sentiments are true, and whose manners simple. Their careful education, and the purity of soul, which is natural to them, render the dominion which they exercise soft and equal; they inspire you from day to day with a stronger interest for all that is great and generous, with more of confidence in all noble hopes, and they know how to repel that

bitter irony, which breathes a death-chill over all the enjoyments of the heart. Still we seldom find among them that quickness of apprehension, which animates conversation, and sets every idea in motion; this sort of pleasure is scarcely to be met with any where out of the most lively and the most witty societies of Paris. The chosen company of a French metropolis can alone confer this rare delight: elsewhere, we generally find only eloquence in public, or tranquil pleasure in familiar, life. Conversation, as a talent, exists in France alone: in all other countries, it answers the purposes of politeness, of argument, or of friendly intercourse: in France, it is an art to which the imagination and the soul are no doubt very necessary, but which possesses, besides these, certain secrets, by which the absence of both may be supplied when necessary.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Influence of the Spirit of Chivalry on Love and Honour.

CHIVALRY is to modern, what the heroic age was to ancient, times: all the noble recollections of the nations of Europe are attached to it. At all the great periods of history, men have embraced some sort of enthusiastic sentiment, as an universal principle of action. Those whom they called heroes, in the most distant ages, had for their object to civilize the earth: the confused traditions, which represent them to us as subduing the monsters of the forests bear, no doubt, an allusion to the first dangers which menaced society at its birth; and from which it was preserved by the supports of its yet new organization. Then

came the enthusiasm of patriotism, and inspired all that was great and brilliant in the actions of Greece and Rome: this enthusiasm became weaker when there was no longer a country to be called one's own; and, a few centuries later, chivalry succeeded to it. Chivalry consisted in the defence of the weak, in the loyalty of valour, in the contempt of deceit, in that Christian charity which endeavoured to introduce humanity even in war; in short, in all those sentiments which substituted the reverence of honour to the ferocious spirit of arms. It is among the northern nations that chivalry had its birth; but, in the south of France, that it was embellished by the charm of poetry and love. The Germans had, in all times, treated women with respect; but the French were the first that tried to please them: the Germans also had their chanters of love, (*Minnesinger*) but nothing that could be compared to our Trouvêres and Troubadours; and it is to this source, perhaps, that we must refer a species of literature strictly national. The spirit of northern mythology had much more resemblance to Christianity than the Paganism of the ancient Gauls; yet is there no country where Christ-

ians have been better knights, or knights better Christians, than in France.

The crusades brought together the gentlemen of all countries, and created out of the spirit of chivalry a sort of European patriotism, which filled every soul with the same sentiment. The feudal government, that political institution so gloomy and severe, but which, in some respects, consolidated the spirit of chivalry, by investing it with the character of love; the feudal government, I say, has continued in Germany even to our own days: it was overthrown in France by Cardinal Richelieu; and, from that epoch to the Revolution, the French have been altogether destitute of any source of enthusiasm. I know it will be said, that the love of their kings was such; but, supposing it possible that this sentiment could extend to a whole nation, still it is confined so entirely to the mere person of the sovereign, that, during the administrations of the Regent and of Louis XV. it would have been difficult, I imagine, for the French to have derived any thing great from its influence. The spirit of chivalry, which still emitted some sparkles in the reign of Louis XIV. was extinguished with him,

and succeeded, according to a very lively and sensible historian,* by the *spirit of fatuity*, which is entirely opposite to it. Instead of protecting women, fatuity seeks to destroy them; instead of despising artifice, she employs it against those feeble beings whom she prides herself in deceiving; and she substitutes the profanation of love in the place of its worship.

Even courage itself, which formerly served as the pledge of loyalty, became nothing better than a brilliant mode of evading its chain; for it was no longer necessary to be true, but only to kill in a duel the man who accuses you of being otherwise; and the empire of society in the great world made almost all the chivalrous virtues disappear. France then found herself without any sort of enthusiastic impulse whatever; and as such impulse is necessary to prevent the corruption and dissolution of nations, it is doubtless that natural necessity which, in the middle of the last century, turned every mind towards the love of liberty.

It seems then that the philosophical pro-

* M. de la Cretelle.

gress of the human race should be divided into four different periods; the heroic times which gave birth to civilization; patriotism, which constituted the glory of antiquity; chivalry, the warlike religion of Europe; and the love of liberty, the history of which dates its origin from the epoch of the Revolution.

Germany, with the exception of a few of its courts, which were inspired with the emulation of imitating France, had not been tainted by the fatuity, the immorality, and incredulity which, since the time of the Regency, had debased the natural character of Frenchmen. Feudality still retained among the Germans the maxims of chivalry: they fought duels, indeed, seldomer than in France; because the Germanic nation is not so lively as the French, and because all ranks of people do not, as in France, participate in the sentiment of bravery; but public opinion was generally much more severe with regard to every thing connected with probity. If a man had, in any manner, been wanting to the laws of morality, ten duels a day would never have set him up again in any person's esteem. Many men of good company have been seen in France, who, when accused of

some blameable action, have answered: "It may be bad enough; but nobody at least will dare to say so before my face." Nothing can imply a more utter depravation of morals; for what would become of human society, if it was only necessary for men to kill each other, to acquire the right of doing one another, in other respects, all the mischief possible? to break their word, to lie, provided nobody dared to say, "You have lied;" in short, to separate loyalty from bravery, and transform courage into a mode of obtaining social impunity!

Since the extinction of the spirit of chivalry in France; since she possessed no longer a Godefroi, a Saint Louis, or a Bayard, to protect weakness, and hold themselves bound by a promise as by the most indissoluble chain, I will venture to say, contrary to the received opinion, that France has perhaps been that country of the world, in which women are the least happy at heart. France was called the Paradise of women, on account of the great share of liberty which the sex enjoys there; but this very liberty arose from the facility with which men detach themselves from them. The Turk, who shuts

up his wife, proves at least by that very conduct how necessary she is to his happiness; the man of gallantry, a character of which the last century furnished us with so many examples, selects women for the victims of his vanity; and this vanity consists not only in seducing, but in afterwards abandoning them. He must, in order to justify it, be able to declare, in phrases light and irreprehensible in themselves, that such a woman has loved him, but that he no longer cares about her. "My self-love tells me, *let her die of chagrin*," said a friend of the Baron de Bezenval; and this very friend appeared to him an object of deep regret, when a premature death prevented him from the accomplishment of this laudable design. *One grows tired of every thing, my angel*, writes M. de la Clos in a novel which makes one shudder at the refinements of immorality which it displays. In short, at this very period, when they pretended that love reigned in France, it seems to me that gallantry, if I may use the expression, really placed women out of the protection of the law. When their momentary reign was over, neither generosity nor gratitude, not even pity, was left them.

They counterfeited the accents of love to make them fall into the snare—like the crocodile, which imitates the voices of children to entrap their mothers.

Louis XIV. so vaunted for his chivalrous gallantry, did he not shew himself the most hard-hearted of men in his conduct towards the very woman, by whom he was most beloved of all, Madame de la Vallière? The details which are given of that transaction in the *Memoires de Madame* are frightful. He pierced with grief the unfortunate heart which breathed only for him, and twenty years of tears, at the foot of the cross, could hardly cicatrize the wounds which the cruel disdain of the monarch had inflicted. Nothing is so barbarous as vanity; and, as society, the *bon-ton*, fashion, success, all put this vanity singularly in play, there is no country, where the happiness of women is in greater danger, than one in which every thing depends upon what is called opinion, and in which every body learns of others what it is good taste to feel.

It must be confessed, that women have ended by taking part in the immorality which destroyed their own true empire:

they have learned to lessen their sufferings by becoming worthless. Nevertheless, with some few exceptions, the virtue of women always depends on the conduct of men. The pretended lightness of women is the consequence of the fear they entertain of being abandoned; they rush into shame from the fear of outrage.

Love is a much more serious quality in Germany than in France. Poetry, the fine arts, even philosophy, and religion, have made this sentiment an object of earthly adoration, which sheds a noble charm over existence.

Germany was not infested, like France, with licentious writings, which circulated among all classes of people, and effected the destruction of sentiment among the high, and of morality among the vulgar. It must be allowed, nevertheless, that the Germans have more imagination than sensibility; and their uprightness is the only pledge for their constancy. The French, in general, respect positive duties; the Germans think themselves less bound by duty than affection. What we have said respecting the facility of divorce affords a proof of this: love is, with

them, more sacred than marriage. It is the effect of an honourable delicacy, no doubt, that they are above all things faithful to promises which the law does not warrant: but those which are warranted by law are nevertheless of greater importance to the interests of society.

The spirit of chivalry still reigns among the Germans, if we may be allowed to say so in a passive sense: they are incapable of deceit, and their integrity discovers itself in all the intimate relations of life; but that severe energy, which imposed so many sacrifices on men, so many virtues on women, and rendered the whole of life one holy exercise, governed by the same prevailing sentiment; this chivalrous energy of the times of old, has left in Germany only an impression long since passed away. Henceforward, nothing great will ever be accomplished there, except by the liberal impulse which, throughout Europe, has succeeded to chivalry.

CHAPTER V.

Of Southern Germany.

It was pretty generally understood, that literature existed in the north of Germany alone, and that the inhabitants of the south abandoned themselves to the enjoyments of sense, while those of the north tasted more exclusively those of the soul. Many men of genius have been produced in the south, but they have formed themselves in the north. Near the coasts of the Baltic we find the noblest establishments, the most distinguished men of science and learning; and from Weimar to Konigsberg, from Konigsberg to Copenhagen, fogs and frosts appear to be the natural element of men of a lofty and vigorous imagination.

No country stands so much as Germany in need of the occupations of literature; for society there affording little charms, and individuals, for the most part, wanting that grace and vivacity which are inspired by nature in warm climates, it follows that the Germans are agreeable only when they are superior in mind, and that they want genius to be witty.

Franconia, Swabia, and Bavaria, before the illustrious establishment of the present academy at Munich, were countries singularly dull and monotonous: no arts, with the exception of music; no literature; a rude accent, which lent itself with difficulty to the pronunciation of southern languages; no society; large assemblies, which looked more like ceremonies than parties of pleasure; obsequious politeness to an inelegant aristocracy; goodness and integrity in every class; but a sort of simpering stiffness, which is the reverse at once both of ease and dignity. One should not therefore be surprised at the criticisms and pleasantries which have been passed on German tediousness. The literary cities are the only objects of real interest, in

a country where society is nothing, and nature very little.

Letters might perhaps have been cultivated in the south of Germany with as much success as in the north, if the sovereigns had ever properly interested themselves in the advancement of them; nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that temperate climates are more favourable to society than to poetry. When the climate is neither inclement nor beautiful—when people live with nothing either to fear or to hope from the heavens, the positive interests of existence become almost the only occupation of the mind; both the delights of the south, and the rigours of the north, have stronger hold over the imagination. Whether we struggle against nature, or intoxicate ourselves with her gifts, the power of the creation is in both cases equally strong, and awakens in us the sentiment of the fine arts, or the interest of the mysteries of the soul.

Southern Germany, temperate in every sense, maintains itself in a monotonous state of well-being, singularly prejudicial to the activity of conduct as well as of thought. The most lively desire of the inhabitants

of this peaceful and fertile country is, that they may continue to exist as they exist at present; and what can this only desire produce? It is not even sufficient for the preservation of that with which they are satisfied.

CHAPTER VI.

*Of Austria.**

THE learned men of the north have accused Austria of neglecting letters and sciences; they have even greatly exaggerated the degree of restraint imposed there by the censure of the press. If Austria has produced no great men in the literary career, it is to be attributed not so much to constraint as to the want of emulation.

It is a country so calm, a country in which competence is so easily secured to all classes of its inhabitants, that they think but little of intellectual enjoyments. They do more for the sake of duty than of fame; the

* This chapter was composed in the year 1808.

rewards of public opinon are so poor, and its punishments so slight, that, without the motive of conscience, there would be no incitement to vigorous action in any sense.

Military exploits ought to be the chief interest of the inhabitants of a monarchy, which has rendered itself illustrious by continual wars; and yet the Austrian nation had so abandoned itself to the repose and the pleasures of life, that even public events made no great noise till the moment arrived of their calling forth the sentiment of patriotism; and even this sentiment is of a tranquil nature in a country where there is nothing but happiness. Many excellent things are to be found in Austria, but few men really of a superior order; for it is there of no great service to be reckoned more able than another; one is not envied for it, but forgotten, which is yet more discouraging. Ambition perseveres in the desire of acquiring power, genius flags of itself; genius, in the midst of society, is a pain, an internal fever, which would require to be treated as real disease, if the rewards of glory did not soften the sufferings it produces.

In Austria, and all other parts of Germany, the lawyers plead in writing, never *viva voce*. The preachers are followed because men observe the practical duties of religion; but they do not attract by their eloquence. The theatres are much neglected; above all, the tragic theatre. Administration is conducted with great wisdom and justice; but there is so much method in all things, that the influence of individuals is scarcely perceptible. Business is conducted in a certain numerical order, which nothing can derange; it is decided by invariable rules, and transacted in profound silence;—silence, which is not the effect of terror; for what is there to be feared in a country, where the virtues of the sovereign and the principles of equity govern all things? but the profound repose of intellects, as of souls, deprives human speech of all its interests. Neither by crime nor by genius, by intolerance nor by enthusiasm, by passion nor by heroism, is existence either disturbed or exalted. The Austrian Cabinet during the last century was considered as very adroit in politics; a quality which little agrees with the German character in general; but men often mistake for profound

policy that which is only the alternative between ambition and weakness. History almost always attributes to individuals, as to governments, more combination of plans than really existed.

Austria, concentrating within herself people so different from each other, as the Bohemians, Hungarians, &c. wants that unity which is so essential to a monarchy: nevertheless, the great moderation of her rulers has for a long time past produced a general bond of union out of the attachment to one individual. The Emperor of Germany was at the same time sovereign over his own dominions and the constitutional head of the empire. In this latter character he had to manage different interests and established laws, and derived from his Imperial majistracy a habit of justice and prudence, which he transferred from them to the administration of his hereditary states. The nations of Bohemia and Hungary, the Tyrolese and the Flemings, who formerly constituted the monarchy, have more natural vivacity than the genuine Austrians: these last employ themselves incessantly in the act of moderating instead of that of encourag-

ing. An equitable government, a fertile soil, a wise and wealthy nation, all contributed to teach them, that for their well-being it was only necessary to maintain their existing condition, and that they had no need whatever for the extraordinary assistance of superior talents. In peaceable times, indeed, they may be dispensed with; but what can we do without them in the grand struggles of empires?

The spirit of Catholicism, which was upper-most at Vienna, though always with moderation, had nevertheless constantly, during the reign of Maria Theresa, repelled what was called the progress of light in the eighteenth century. Then came Joseph the Second, who lavished all these lights on a country not yet prepared either for the good or the evil which they were qualified to produce. He succeeded, for the moment, in the object of his wishes, because throughout Austria he met with no active emotion either in favour of, or contrary to, his desires; but, "after "his death,"* nothing remained of all his

* Suppressed by the censurer.

establishments, because nothing can last but that which advances by degrees.

Industry, good living, and domestic enjoyments, are the principal interests of Austria; notwithstanding the glory which she acquired by the perseverance and valour of her armies, the military spirit has not really penetrated all classes of the nation. Her armies are, for her, so many moving fortifications, but there is no greater emulation in this than in other professions; the most honourable officers are at the same time the bravest; and this reflects upon them so much the more credit, as a brilliant and rapid advancement is seldom the consequence of their efforts. In Austria they almost scruple to shew favour to superior men, and it sometimes seems as if government wished to push equality even further than nature itself, and to treat talent and mediocrity with the same undistinguishing impartiality.

The absence of emulation has, indeed, one advantage—that it allays vanity; but often pride itself partakes of it; and, in the end, there remains only a sort of easy arrogance, which is satisfied with the exterior of all things.

I think that it was also a bad system, that of forbidding the importation of foreign books. If it were possible to preserve to a country the energy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by defending it from the writings of the eighteenth, this might perhaps be a great advantage; but as it is absolutely necessary, that the opinions and the discoveries of Europe must penetrate into the midst of a monarchy, which is itself the centre of Europe, it is a disadvantage to let them reach it only by halves; for the worst writings are those which are most sure to make their way. Books, filled with immoral pleasantries and selfish principles, amuse the vulgar, and always fall into their hands; while prohibitory laws are absolutely effective only against those philosophical works, which tend to elevate the mind, and enlarge the ideas. The constraint which these laws impose is precisely that which is wanting to favour the indolence of the understanding, but not to preserve the innocence of the heart.

In a country where all emotion is of slow growth; in a country where every thing around inspires a deep tranquillity, the

slightest obstacle is enough to deter men from acting or writing, or even (if it is required) from thinking. What can we have better than happiness? they say: it is better to understand, however, what they mean by the word. Does happiness consist in the faculties we develop, or in those we suppress? No doubt a government is always worthy of esteem, so long as it does not abuse its power, nor sacrifice justice to its interest; but the happiness of sleep is deceitful; great reverses may occur to disturb it; and we ought not to let the horses stand still for the sake of holding the reins more gently and easily.

A nation may easily content itself with those common blessings of life, repose and ease; and superficial thinkers will pretend, that the whole social art is confined to securing these blessings to the people. Yet are more noble gifts necessary to inspire the feeling of patriotism. This feeling is combined of the remembrances which great men have left behind them, the admiration inspired by the chefs-d'œuvre of national genius, and lastly, the love which is felt for the institutions, the religion, and the glory of our

country. These riches of the soul are the only riches that a foreign yoke could tear away; if therefore material enjoyments were the only objects of thought, might not the same soil always produce them, let who will be its masters?

They believed in Austria, during the last century, that the cultivation of letters would tend to enfeeble the military spirit; but they were deceived. Rodolph of Hapsbourg untied from his neck the golden chain which he wore, to decorate a then celebrated poet. Maximilian dictated the poem which he caused to be written. Charles the Fifth knew, and cultivated, almost all languages. Most of the thrones of Europe were formerly filled by sovereigns well informed in all kind of learning, and who discovered in literary acquirements a new source of mental grandeur. Neither learning nor the sciences will ever hurt the energy of character. Eloquence renders men more brave, and courage renders them more eloquent; every thing that makes the heart beat in unison with a generous sentiment, doubles the true strength of man, his will: but that systematic selfishness, in which a man

sometimes comprehends his family as an appendage of himself; but that philosophy, which is merely vulgar at bottom, however elegant in appearance, which leads to the contempt of every thing that is called illusion, that is to say, self devotion and enthusiasm, this is the sort of illumination most to be dreaded for the virtues of a nation; this, nevertheless, is what no censors of the press can ever expel from a country surrounded by the atmosphere of the eighteenth century: we can never escape from what is bad and hurtful in books, but by freely admitting from all quarters whatever they contain of greatness and liberality.

The representation of "Don Carlos" was forbidden at Vienna, because they would not tolerate his love for Elizabeth. In Schiller's "Joan of Arc," they made Agnes Sorel the lawful wife of Charles the Seventh. The public library was forbidden to let the "Esprit des Lois" be read: and, while all this constraint was practised, the romances of Crébillon circulated in every body's hands; licentious works found entrance, and serious ones alone were suppressed.

The mischief of bad books is only to be corrected by good ones; the bad consequences of illumination are only avoided by rendering the illumination more complete. There are two roads to every thing: to retrench that which is dangerous, or inspire strength to resist it. The latter is the only method that suits the times in which we live; ignorance cannot now have innocence for its companion, and therefore can only do mischief. So many words have been spoken, so many sophisms repeated, that it is necessary to know much, in order to judge rightly; and the times are passed when men confined their ideas to the patrimony of their fathers. We must think then, not in what manner to repel the introduction of light, but how to render it complete, so that it may not produce false colours by the interruption of its beams. A government must not pretend to keep a great nation in ignorance of the spirit which governs the age; this spirit contains the elements of strength and greatness, which may be employed with success, when men are not afraid boldly to meet every question that presents itself: they will then

find, in eternal truths, resources against transitory errors, and in liberty itself, the support of order and the augmentation of power.

CHAPTER VII.

Vienna.

VIENNA is situated in a plain surrounded by picturesque hills. The Danube, which passes through and encircles it, divides itself into several branches forming many pleasant islets; but this river loses its own dignity in so many windings, and fails to produce the impression which its ancient renown promises. Vienna is an old town, small enough in itself, but begirt with spacious suburbs: it is pretended that the city, surrounded by its fortifications, is not more extensive now than it was at the time when Richard Cœur de Lion was imprisoned near its gates. The streets are as narrow as those in Italy, the palaces recal, in some degree,

those of Florence; in short, nothing there resembles the rest of Germany, except a few Gothic edifices, which bring back the middle ages to the imagination.

The first of these edifices is the tower of St. Stephen, which rises above all the other churches of Vienna, and reigns majestically over the good and peaceful city, whose generations and glories it has seen pass away. It took two centuries, they say, to finish this tower, begun in 1100; the whole Austrian history is in some manner connected with it. No building can be so patriotic as a church; it is there alone that all classes of the nation are assembled, that alone which brings to the recollection, not merely public events, but the secret thoughts and inward affections which both chiefs and people have carried into its sanctuary. The temple of the divinity seems present, like God himself, to ages past away.

The monument of Prince Eugene is the only one that has been, for some time past, erected in this church; he there lies, waiting for other heroes. As I approached it, I saw a notice affixed to one of its pillars, that a young woman begged

of those who should read this paper to pray for her during her sickness. The name of this young woman was not given; it was some unfortunate being, addressing herself to beings unknown, not for their alms, but for their prayers; and all this passed by the side of the illustrious dead, who had himself, perhaps, compassion on the unhappy living. It is a pious custom among the Catholics, and one which we ought to imitate, to leave the churches always open; there are so many moments in which we feel the want of such an asylum; and never do we enter it without feeling an emotion which does good to the soul, and restores it, as by a holy ablution, to strength and purity.

There is no great city without its public building, its promenade, or some other wonder of art or of nature, to which the recollections of infancy attach themselves; and I think that the *Prater* must possess a charm of this description for the inhabitants of Vienna: no where do we find, so near the capital, a public walk so rich in the beauties, at once of rude and ornamented nature. A majestic forest extends to the banks of the

Danube; herds of deer are seen from afar passing through the meadow; they return every morning, and fly away every evening, when the influx of company disturbs their solitude. A spectacle, seen at Paris only three times a year, on the road to Long-Champ, is renewed every day, during the fine season, at Vienna. This is an Italian custom—the daily promenade at the same hour. Such regularity would be impracticable in a country where pleasures are so diversified as at Paris; but the Viennese, from whatever cause, would find it difficult to relinquish the habit of it. It must be agreed that it forms a most striking coup d'œil, the sight of a whole nation assembled under the shade of magnificent trees, on a turf kept ever verdant by the waters of the Danube. The people of fashion in carriages, those of the lower orders on foot, meet there every evening. In this wise country, even pleasures are looked upon in the light of duties, and they have this advantage—that they never grow tedious, however uniform. They preserve as much regularity in dissipation as in business, and waste their time as methodically as they employ it.

If you enter one of the redoubts where balls are given to the citizens on holidays, you will behold men and women gravely performing, opposite to each other, the steps of a minuet, of which they have imposed on themselves the amusement; the crowd often separates a couple while dancing, and yet each persists, as if they were dancing to acquit their consciences; each moves alone, to right and left, forwards and backwards, without caring about the other, who is figuring all the while with equal conscientiousness; now and then, only, they utter a little exclamation of joy, and then immediately return to the serious discharge of their pleasure.

It is above all on the Prater that one is struck with the ease and prosperity of the people of Vienna. This city has the reputation of consuming more victuals than any other place of an equal population; and this species of superiority, a little vulgar, is not contested. One sees whole families of citizens and artificers, setting off at five in the evening for the Prater, there to take a sort of rural refreshment, equally substantial with a dinner elsewhere, and the money

which they can afford to lay out upon it proves how laborious they are, and under how mild a government they live.

Tens of thousands return at night, leading by the hand their wives and children; no disorder, no quarrelling disturbs all this multitude, whose voice is hardly heard, so silent is their joy! This silence, nevertheless, does not proceed from any melancholy disposition of the soul; it is rather a certain physical happiness, which induces men, in the south of Germany, to ruminate on their sensations, as in the north on their ideas. The vegetative existence of the south of Germany bears some analogy to the contemplative existence of the north: in each, there is repose, indolence, and reflection.

If you could imagine an equally numerous assembly of Parisians met together in the same place, the air would sparkle with bon mots, pleasantries, and disputes; never can a Frenchman enjoy any pleasure in which his self-love would not in some manner find itself a place.

Noblemen of rank take their promenade on horses, or in carriages of the greatest magnificence and good taste; all their

amusement consists in bowing, in an alley of the Prater, to those whom they have just left in a drawing room; but the diversity of objects renders it impossible to pursue any train of reflection, and the greater number of men take a pleasure in thus dissipating those reflections which trouble them. These grandees of Vienna, the most illustrious and the most wealthy in Europe, abuse none of the advantages they possess; they allow the humblest hackney coaches to stop their brilliant equipages. The Emperor and his brothers even quietly keep their place in the string, and choose to be considered, in their amusements, as private individuals; they make use of their privileges only when they fulfil their duties. In the midst of the crowd you often meet with Oriental, Hungarian, and Polish costumes, which enliven the imagination; and harmonious bands of music, at intervals, give to all this assemblage the air of a peaceable fête, in which every body enjoys himself without being troubled about his neighbour.

You never meet a beggar at these promenades; none are to be seen in Vienna; the charitable establishments there are regu-

lated with great order and liberality; private and public benevolence is directed with a great spirit of justice, and the people themselves having, in general, more industry and commercial ability than in the rest of Germany, each man regularly pursues his own individual destiny. There are few instances in Austria of crimes deserving death; every thing, in short, in this country, bears the mark of a parental, wise, and religious government. The foundations of the social edifice are good and respectable; "but it wants a pinnacle and columns to "render it a fit temple of genius and of "glory."*

I was at Vienna, in 1808, when the Emperor Francis the Second married his first cousin, the daughter of the Archduke of Milan and the Archduchess Beatrix, the last princess of that house of Este so celebrated by Ariosto and Tasso. The Archduke Ferdinand and his noble consort found themselves both deprived of their states by the vicissitudes of war, and the young Empress, brought up "in these cruel "times,"† united in her person the double

* Suppressed by the censure.

† Suppressed by the censure.

interest of greatness and misfortune. It was an union concluded by inclination, and into which no political convenience had entered, although one more honourable could not have been contracted. It caused at once a feeling of sympathy and respect, for the family affections which brought us near to this marriage, and for the illustrious rank which set us at a distance from it. A young prince, the Archbishop of Waizen, bestowed the nuptial benediction on his sister and sovereign; the mother of the Empress, whose virtues and knowledge conspire to exercise the most powerful empire over her children, became in a moment the subject of her daughter, and walked in the procession behind her with a mixture of deference and of dignity, which recalled at the same time the rights of the crown and those of nature. The brothers of the Emperor and Empress, all employed in the army or in the administration, all in different ranks, all equally devoted to the public good, accompanied them respectively to the altar, and the church was filled with the grandees of the state, with the wives, the daughters, and the mothers, of the most ancient of the

Teutonic nobility. Nothing new was produced for the fête; it was sufficient for its pomp to display what each possessed. Even the women's ornaments were hereditary, and the diamonds that had descended in every family consecrated the remembrances of the past to the decoration of youth; ancient times were present to all, and we enjoyed a magnificence, the result of the preparations of ages, but which cost the people no new sacrifices.

The amusements which succeeded to the marriage consecration had in them almost as much of dignity as the ceremony itself. It is not thus that private individuals ought to give entertainments, but it is perhaps right to find in all the actions of kings the severe impression of their august destiny. Not far from this church, around which the discharge of cannons and the beating of drums announced the renewal of the union between the houses of Este and Hapsburgh, we see the asylum, which has for these two centuries enclosed the tombs of the Emperors of Austria and their family. There, in the vault of the Capuchins, it was that Maria Theresa, for thirty years, heard mass in the very sight of the burial place which she had prepared

for herself by the side of her husband. This illustrious princess had suffered so much in the days of her early youth, that the pious sentiment of the instability of life never quitted her, even in the midst of her greatness. We have many examples of a serious and constant devotion among the sovereigns of the earth; as they obey death only, his irresistible power strikes them the more forcibly. The difficulties of life intervene between ourselves and the tomb; but every thing lies level before the eyes of kings, even to the last, and that very level renders the end more visible.

The feast induces us naturally to reflect upon the tomb; poetry has, in all times, delighted herself in drawing these two images by the side of each other; and fate itself is a terrible poet which has too often discovered the art of uniting them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Society.

THE rich and the noble seldom inhabit the suburbs of Vienna; and, notwithstanding that the city possesses in other respects all the advantages of a great capital, the good company is there brought together as closely as in a small town. These easy communications, in the midst of all the enjoyments of fortune and luxury, render their habitual life very convenient, and the frame of society; if we may so express it; that is to say, its habits, usages, and manners, are extremely agreeable. Among foreigners we hear of the severe etiquette and aristocratical pride of the great Austrian nobility; this accusation is unfounded; there

is simplicity, politeness, and, above all, honesty, in the good company of Vienna; and the same spirit of justice and regularity, which governs all important affairs, is to be met with also in the smallest circumstances. People are as punctual to their dinner and supper engagements, as they would be in the discharge of more essential promises; and those false airs, which make elegance consist in a contempt of the forms of politeness, have never been introduced among them. Nevertheless, one of the principal disadvantages of the society of Vienna is, that the nobles and men of letters do not mix together. The pride of the nobles is not the cause of this; but as they do not reckon many distinguished writers at Vienna, and people read but little, every body lives in his own particular coterie, because there is nothing but coteries in a country where general ideas and public interests have so small need of being developed. From this separation of classes it results that men of letters are deficient in grace, and that men of the world are rarely abundant in information.

The exactitude of politeness, which in

some respects is a virtue, since it frequently demands sacrifices, has introduced into Vienna the most fatiguing of all possible forms. All the good company transports itself *en masse*, from one drawing room to another, three or four times every week. A certain time is lost in the duties of the toilet, which are necessary in these great assemblies; more is lost in the streets, and on the stair-cases, waiting till the carriages draw up in order; still more in sitting three hours at table; and, it is impossible, in these crowded assemblies, to hear any thing that is spoken beyond the circle of customary phrases. This daily exhibition of so many individuals to each other, is a happy invention of mediocrity to annul the faculties of the mind. If it were established that thought is to be considered as a malady, against which a regular course of medicine is necessary, nothing could be imagined better adapted for the purpose than a sort of distraction at once noisy and insipid; such as permits the following up of no ideas, and converts language into a mere chattering, which may be taught men as well as birds.

I have seen a piece performed at Vienna, in which Harlequin enters, clothed in a long gown and a magnificent wig; and all at once he juggles himself away, leaving his wig and gown standing to figure in his place, and goes to display his real person elsewhere. One might propose this game of legerdemain to those who frequent large assemblies. People attend them, not for the sake of meeting any object that they are desirous of pleasing: severity of manners and tranquillity of soul concentre in Austria all the affections in the bosom of one's family. They do not resort to them for the purposes of ambition; for every thing passes with so much regularity in this country, that intrigue has little hold there; and besides, it is not in the midst of society that it can find room to exercise itself. These visits and these circles are invented for the sake of giving all people the same thing to do, at the same hour; and thus they prefer the ennui, of which they partake with their equals, to the amusement which they would be forced to create for themselves at home.

Great assemblies and great dinners take

place in other cities besides Vienna; but as at such meetings we generally see all the distinguished individuals of the countries where we assemble, we there find more opportunities of escaping from those forms of conversation, which upon such occasions succeed to the first salutations, and prolong them in words. Society does not in Austria, as in France, contribute to the development or the animation of the understanding; it leaves in the head nothing but noise and emptiness; whence it follows, besides, that the more intelligent members of the community generally estrange themselves from it; it is frequented by women alone, and even that share of understanding which they possess is astonishing, considering the nature of the life they lead. Foreigners justly appreciate the agreeableness of their conversation; but none are so rarely to be met with in the drawing rooms of the capital of Germany, as the men of Germany itself.

In the society of Vienna, a stranger must be pleased with the proper assurance, the elegance, and nobleness of manner, which reign throughout under the influence of the women; yet there is wanting to it something

to say, something to do, an end, an interest. You feel a wish that to-day may be different from yesterday, yet without such variety as would interrupt the chain of affections and habits. In retirement, monotony tranquillizes the soul; in the great world, it only fatigues the mind.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the Desire among Foreigners of imitating the French Spirit.

THE destruction of the spirit of feudal government, and of the old baronial life, which was the consequence of it, has introduced a great deal of leisure among the nobility; this leisure has rendered the amusement of society necessary to their existence; and, as the French are reputed masters in the art of conversation, they have made themselves throughout Europe the sovereigns of opinion, or rather of fashion, by which opinion is so easily counterfeited. Since the reign of Louis XIV. all the good society of the continent, Spain and Italy excepted, has made its

self-love consist in the imitation of the French. In England there exists a constant topic of conversation, that of politics, the interest of which is the interest of each individual and of all alike; in the south there is no society; there the brilliancy of the sun, love and the fine arts, fill up the whole of existence. At Paris, we talk upon subjects of literature; and the spectacles of the theatre continually changing, give place to ingenious and witty remarks. But in most other great cities, the only subject that presents itself for conversation consists in the anecdotes and observations of the day, respecting those very persons of whom what we call good company is composed. It is a sort of gossip, ennobled by the great names that are introduced, but resting on the same foundation as that of the lowest vulgar; for except that their forms of speech are more elegant, the subject of it is the same, that is to say, their neighbours.

The only truly liberal subjects of conversation are thoughts and actions of universal interest. That habitual backbiting, of which the idleness of drawing-rooms and the bar-

renness of the understanding make a sort of necessity, may be more or less modified by goodness of character: yet there is always enough of it to enable us to hear, at every step, at every word, the buz of petty tattle, which, like so many flies, has the power of vexing even a lion. In France, people employ the powerful arms of ridicule for mutual annoyance, and for gaining the vantage ground, which they expect will afford them the triumph of self-love; elsewhere, a sort of indolent chattering uses up the faculties of the mind, and renders it incapable of energetic efforts of any description whatever.

Agreeable conversation, even when merely on trifles, and deriving its charm only from the grace of expression, is capable of conferring a high degree of pleasure; it may be affirmed, without extravagance, that the French are almost alone masters of this sort of discourse. It is a dangerous, but a lively exercise, in which subjects are played with like a ball, which in its turn comes back to the hand of the thrower.

Foreigners, when they wish to imitate the French, affect more immorality, and are

yet more frivolous than they, from an apprehension that seriousness may be deficient in grace, and that their thoughts and reflections may fail of possessing the true Parisian accent.

The Austrians, in general, have at once too much stiffness and too much sincerity, to be ambitious of attaining foreign manners. Nevertheless, they are not yet sufficiently Germans, they are not yet sufficiently versed in German literature; it is too much the fashion at Vienna to believe that it is a mark of good taste to speak the French language only; forgetting that the true glory, the real charm, of every nation, must consist in its own national spirit and character.

The French have been the dread of all Europe, particularly of Germany, by their dexterity in the art of seizing and pointing out the ridiculous. The words elegance and grace possessed I know not what magical influence in giving the alarm to self-love. It seemed as if sentiments, actions, life itself, were, before all things, to be subjected to this very subtile legislation of fashion, which is a sort of treaty between

the self-love of individuals and that of society; a treaty on which these several and respective vanities have erected for themselves a republican constitution of government, which pronounces the sentence of ostracism upon all that is strong and marked in human nature. These forms, these modes of agreement, light in appearance and despotic at bottom, regulate the whole of existence: they have by degrees undermined love, enthusiasm, religion, all things except that selfishness which cannot be reached by irony, because it exposes itself to censure, but not to ridicule.

The understanding of the Germans agrees less than that of any other people with this measured frivolity; that understanding has hardly any power over the surfaces of things; it must examine deeply in order to comprehend; it seizes nothing on the wing; and it would be in vain that the Germans disencumbered themselves of the properties and ideas instilled into them at their birth; since the loss of the substance would not render them lighter in the forms, and they would rather become Germans without worth, than amiable Frenchmen.

It must not be thence concluded that grace is denied them; imagination and sensibility confer it upon them, when they resign themselves to their natural dispositions. Their gaiety—and gaiety they possess, particularly in Austria—has not the smallest resemblance to the gaiety of the French. The Tyrolese farces, by which at Vienna the great are equally amused with the vulgar, are much more nearly allied to Italian buffoonery than to French ridicule: they consist in comic scenes of strong character, representing human nature with truth, but not social manners with delicacy. Yet still this gaiety, such as it is, is worth more than the imitation of a foreign grace: such grace may well be dispensed with; but perfection, in whatever style, is still something. "The "ascendant obtained by French manners has "perhaps prepared foreigners to believe them "invincible."* There is but one method of resisting this influence; and that consists in very decided national habits and character. From the moment that men seek to resemble the French, they must yield the

* Suppressed by the police.

advantage to them in every thing. The English, not fearing the ridicule of which the French are masters, have sometimes ventured to pay them in kind; and, so far from English manners appearing ungraceful even in France, the French, so generally imitated, became imitators in their turn, and England was for a long time as much the fashion at Paris, as Paris itself in all other parts of the world.

The Germans might create to themselves a society of a most instructive cast, and altogether analogous to their taste and character. Vienna being the capital of Germany, that place in which all the comforts and ornaments of life are most easily to be found collected, might in this respect have rendered great services to the German spirit, if foreigners had not almost exclusively presided at all their assemblies. The generality of Austrians, who know not how to conform to the French language and customs, lived entirely out of the world; from whence it resulted that they were never softened by the conversation of women, but remained at once shy and unpolished, despising every thing that is called grace, and

yet secretly fearing to appear deficient in it; they neglected the cultivation of their understandings under the pretext of military occupations, and yet they often neglected those occupations also, because they never heard any thing that might make them feel the value and the charm of glory. They thought they shewed themselves good Germans in withdrawing from a society in which foreigners had the lead, yet never dreamed of establishing another, capable of improving the understanding and unfolding the mind.

The Poles and Russians, who constituted the charm of society at Vienna, spoke nothing but French, and contributed to the disuse of the German language. The Polish women have very seductive manners; they unite an Oriental imagination with the suppleness and the vivacity of France. Yet, even among the Sclavonic, the most flexible of all nations, the imitation of the French style is often very fatiguing; the French verses of the Poles and Russians resemble, with some few exceptions, the Latin verses of the middle age. A foreign language is always, in many respects, a dead

language. French verses are at the same time the easiest and the most difficult to be written. To tie one to another, hemistichs, which are so much in the habit of being found together, is but a labour of the memory; but it is necessary to have breathed the air of a country, to have thought, enjoyed, or suffered, in its language, in order to describe poetically what is felt. Foreigners, who are above all things proud of speaking French correctly, dare not form any opinion of our writers otherwise than as they are guided by the authority of literary critics, lest they should pass for not understanding them. They boast the style more than the ideas, because ideas belong to all nations, and the French alone are judges of style in their own language.

If you meet a true Frenchman, you take a pleasure in speaking with him on subjects of French literature; you find yourself at home, and talk about your mutual affairs: but a foreigner Frenchified does not allow himself a single opinion or phrase not strictly orthodox; and it is most frequently an obsolete orthodoxy that he takes for the current opinion of the day. In many

northern countries, people still repeat anecdotes of the court of Louis the Fourteenth. Foreigners, who imitate the French, relate the quarrels of Mademoiselle de Fontanges and Madame de Montespan, with a prolixity of detail, which would be tedious even in recording a transaction of yesterday. This erudition of the boudoir, this obstinate attachment to some received ideas, for no other reason than the difficulty of laying in a new stock of provisions of the same nature, all this is tiresome and even hurtful; for the true strength of a country is its natural character; and the imitation of foreigners, under all circumstances whatever, is a want of patriotism.

Frenchmen of sense, when they travel, are not pleased with finding among foreigners the spirit of Frenchmen; and, on the contrary, look out for those who unite national to individual originality. French milliners export to the colonies, to Germany, and to the north, what they commonly call their *shop-fund (fonds de boutique)*; yet they carefully collect the national habits of the same countries, and look upon them, with good reason, as very elegant models. What

is true with regard to dress, is equally true with regard to the understanding. We have a cargo of madrigals, calembourgs, vaudevilles, which we pass off to foreigners when they are done with in France; but the French themselves value nothing in foreign literature but its indigenous beauties. There is no nature, no life, in imitation; and, in general, to all these understandings and to all these works, imitated from the French, may be applied the eulogium pronounced by Orlando in Ariosto upon his mare, while he is dragging her after him, "She possesses all the good qualities that can be imagined: but has one fault, that she is dead."

CHAPTER X.

Of supercilious Folly and benevolent Mediocrity.

INTELLECTUAL superiority is seldom met with any where; and, for this very reason, it retains the name of superiority: thus, in order to judge of national character, we should examine the mass of the people. Men of genius are fellow-citizens every where; but, to perceive justly the difference between the French and Germans, we should take pains to understand the communities of which the two nations are composed. A Frenchman can speak, even without ideas; a German has always more in his head than he is able to express. We may be entertained by a Frenchman, even without understanding. He

relates all he has done and seen, all the good that he thinks of himself, the praises he has received, the great lords he is acquainted with, the success he hopes for. A German, unless he thinks, can say nothing; he is embarrassed by forms, which he wishes to render polite, and by which he incommodes others, as well as himself. In France, folly is animated, but supercilious. She boasts of not being able to comprehend, though you demand of her ever so little attention, and thinks to lessen what she does not understand, by affirming that it is obscure. The prevailing opinion of the country being, that success is the criterion of every thing; even fools, in the quality of spectators, think themselves capable of influencing the intrinsic merit of things, by refusing to afford them the distinction of their applause. People of mediocrity, in Germany, are, on the contrary, full of good intention: they would blush at finding themselves unable to rise to the level of the ideas of some distinguished writer; and, far from reckoning themselves judges, they aspire to become disciples.

In France, there are so many ready-made

phrases on every subject, that, with their assistance, a fool may discourse well enough for some time, and for a moment even seem a man of understanding; in Germany, an ignorant person never dares profess an opinion on any subject whatever with confidence; for, no opinion being received as incontestable, you can advance none without being previously armed to defend it: thus ordinary people are, for the most part, silent, and contribute nothing to the pleasure of society, except the charm of good-nature. In Germany, distinguished persons only know how to talk; while, in France, every one is ready to bear his share in conversation. People of superior minds are indulgent in France, and severe in Germany: on the contrary, French fools are malignant and jealous; while those of Germany, however bounded in intellect, are yet able to praise and admire. The ideas circulated in Germany, on many subjects, are new, and often whimsical; from whence it follows, that those who respect them appear, for some time, to possess a sort of borrowed understanding. In France, it is by manners that men give themselves an illusory importance. These man-

ners are agreeable, but uniform; and the discipline of fashion wears away all the variety that they might otherwise possess.

A man of wit told me, that, one evening, at a masked ball, he walked before a looking glass; and that, not knowing how to point himself out to himself, from the crowd of persons wearing similar dominos with his own, he nodded his head to recognize himself: the same may be said of the dress with which the understanding clothes itself in the world. We almost confound ourselves with others—so little is the real character shewn in any of us! Folly finds itself well off in all this confusion, and would make advantage of it by contesting the possession of real merit. Stupidity and folly are essentially different in this—stupid people voluntarily submit themselves to nature, while fools always flatter themselves with the hope of governing in society.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the Spirit of Conversation.

In the east, when men have nothing to say, they smoke; and, while they are smoking, from time to time, salute each other with their arms folded across their breasts, as a mark of friendship; but, in the west, people prefer to talk all day long—and the warmth of the soul is often dissipated in these conversations, where self-love is always on the wing to display itself, ascending to the taste of the moment, and of the circle in which it finds itself.

It seems to me an acknowledged fact, that Paris is, of all cities in the world, that in which the spirit and taste for conversation are most generally diffused; and that disorder, which they call the *mal du pays*, that undefinable longing for our native land, which

exists independently even of the friends we have left behind there, applies particularly to the pleasure of conversation which Frenchmen find no where else in the same degree as at home. Volney relates, that some French emigrants began, during the revolution, to establish a colony and clear some lands in America; but they were continually quitting their work to go and talk, as they said, in town—and this town, New Orleans, was distant six hundred leagues from their place of residence. The necessity of conversation is felt by all classes of people in France: speech is not there, as elsewhere, merely the means of communicating from one to another, ideas, sentiments, and transactions; but it is an instrument on which they are fond of playing, and which animates the spirits, like music among some people, and strong liquors among others.

That sort of pleasure, which is produced by an animated conversation, does not precisely depend on the nature of that conversation; the ideas and knowledge which it develops do not form its principal interest; it is a certain manner of acting upon one another, of giving mutual and instantaneous delight, of

speaking the moment one thinks, of acquiring immediate self-enjoyment, of receiving applause without labour, of displaying the understanding in all its shades by accent, gesture, look; of eliciting, in short, at will, the electric sparks, which relieve many by the very excess of their vivacity, and serve to awaken others out of a state of painful apathy.

Nothing is more foreign to this talent than the character and disposition of the German intellect; they require in all things a serious result. Bacon has said, that *conversation is not the road leading to the house, but a bye path where people walk with pleasure.* The Germans give the necessary time to all things, but what is necessary to conversation is amusement; if men pass this line, they fall into discussion, into serious argument, which is rather an useful occupation than an agreeable art. It must also be confessed, that the taste for society, and the intoxication of mind which it produces, render them singularly incapable of application and study, and that the virtues of the Germans depend perhaps in some respects upon the very absence of this spirit.

The ancient forms of politeness, still in full force almost all over Germany, are contrary to the ease and familiarity of conversation; the most inconsiderable titles, which are yet the longest to be pronounced, are there bestowed and repeated twenty times at the same meal; every dish, every glass of wine, must be offered with a sedulity and a pressing manner, which is mortally tedious to foreigners. There is a sort of goodness at the bottom of all these usages; but they could not subsist for an instant in a country where pleasantry may be risked without offence to susceptibility; and yet, where can be the grace and the charm of society, if it forbids that gentle ridicule which diverts the mind, and adds even to the charm of good-nature an agreeable mode of expression? The course of ideas for the last century has been entirely directed by conversation. They thought for the purpose of speaking, and spoke for the purpose of being applauded, and whatever could not be said seemed to be somewhat superfluous in the soul. The desire of pleasing is a very agreeable disposition, yet it differs much from the necessity of being beloved: the desire of pleas-

ing renders us dependant on opinion, the necessity of being beloved sets us free from it; we may desire to please even those whom we would injure, and this is exactly what is called coquetry; this coquetry does not appertain exclusively to the women, there is enough of it in all forms of behaviour adopted to testify more affection than is really felt. The integrity of the Germans permits to them nothing of this sort; they construe grace literally, they consider the charm of expression as an engagement for conduct, and thence proceeds their susceptibility; for they never hear a word without drawing a consequence from it, and do not conceive that speech can be treated as a liberal art, which has no other end or consequence than the pleasure which men find in it. The spirit of conversation is sometimes attended with the inconvenience of impairing the sincerity of character; it is not a combined, but an unpremeditated deception. The French have admitted into it a gaiety which renders them amiable, but it is not the less certain, that all that is most sacred in this world has been shaken to its centre by grace, at least by that sort

of grace that attaches importance to nothing, and turns all things into ridicule.

The bons mots of the French have been quoted from one end of Europe to the other. At all times they have displayed the brilliancy of their merit, and solaced their griefs in a lively and agreeable manner; at all times they have stood in need of one another, as alternate hearers and admirers; at all times they have excelled in the art of knowing where to speak and where to be silent, when any commanding interest triumphs over their natural liveliness; at all times they have possessed the talent of living fast, of cutting short long discourses, of giving way to their successors who are desirous of speaking in their turn; at all times, in short, they have known how to take from thought and feeling no more than is necessary to animate conversation, without fatiguing the weak interest which men generally feel for one another.

The French are in the habit of treating their distresses lightly from the fear of fatiguing their friends; they guess the ennui that they would occasion by that which they find themselves capable of sustaining; they

hasten to demonstrate an elegant carelessness about their own fate, in order to have the honour, instead of receiving the example of it. The desire of appearing amiable induces men to assume an expression of gaiety, whatever may be the inward disposition of the soul; the physiognomy by degrees influences the feelings, and that which we do for the purpose of pleasing others soon takes off the edge of our own individual sufferings.

"A sensible woman has said, that *Paris is, "of all the world, the place where men can "most easily dispense with being happy;"** it is in this respect that it is so convenient to the unfortunate human race: but nothing can metamorphose a city of Germany into Paris, or cause the Germans, without entirely destroying their own individuality, to receive, like us, the benefits of dissipation. If they succeeded in escaping from themselves, they would end in losing themselves altogether.

The talent and habit of society conduce much to the discovery of human characters: to succeed in conversation, one must be able clearly to observe the impression which is pro-

* Suppressed by the Literary Censorship; because there must be happiness in Paris, where the Emperor lives.

duced at every moment on those in company, that which they wish to conceal or seek to exaggerate, the inward satisfaction of some, the forced smile of others; one may see, passing over the countenances of those who listen, half-formed censures, which may be evaded by hastening to dissipate them before self-love is engaged on their side. One may also behold there the first birth of approbation, which may be strengthened without however exacting from it more than it is willing to bestow. There is no arena in which vanity displays itself in such a variety of forms as in conversation.

I once knew a man, who was agitated by praise to such a degree, that whenever it was bestowed upon him, he exaggerated what he had just said, and took such pains to add to his success that he always ended in losing it. I never dared to applaud him, from the fear of leading him to affectation, and of his making himself ridiculous by the heartiness of his self-love. Another was so afraid of the appearance of wishing to display himself, that he let fall words negligently and contemptuously. His assumed indolence betrayed one more affectation only, that of

pretending to have none. When vanity displays herself, she is good-natured; when she hides herself, the fear of being discovered renders her sour, and she affects indifference, satiety, in short, all that can persuade other men that she has no need of them. These different combinations are amusing for the observer, and one is always astonished that self-love does not take the course, which is so simple, of naturally avowing its desire to please, and making the utmost possible use of grace and truth to attain the object.

The tact which society requires, the necessity which it imposes of calling different minds into action, all this labour of thoughts in its relation with men would be certainly useful to the Germans in many respects, by giving them more knowledge of the world, more nicety and dexterity; but in this talent of conversation there is a sort of address which always takes away something from the inflexibility of morality; if we could altogether dispense with the art of *managing* men, the human character would certainly be the better in respect of greatness and energy.

The French are the most skilful diplomatists in Europe; and the very same persons,

whom the world accuses of indiscretion and impertinence, know better than all the world besides how to keep a secret, and how to win those whom they find worth the trouble. They never displease others but when they choose to do so; that is to say, when their vanity conceives that it will be better served by a contemptuous than by an obliging deportment. The spirit of conversation has remarkably called out in the French the more serious spirit of political negotiation; there is no foreign embassador that can contend with them in this department, unless, absolutely setting aside all pretension to finesse, he goes straight forward in business, like one who fights without knowing the art of fencing.

The relations of the different classes with one another were also well calculated to develop in France, the sagacity, extent, and decencies, of the spirit of society. The distinction of ranks was not marked in a positive manner, and there was constant room for ambition in the undefined space which was open to all by turns to conquer or lose. The rights of the tiers-état, of the parliaments, of the noblesse, even the power of

the king, nothing was determined by an invariable rule; all was lost, as may be said, in the address of conversation; the most serious difficulties were evaded by the delicate variations of words and manners, and it seldom happened to any one either to offend another, or to yield to him; both extremes were avoided so carefully. The great families had also among themselves pretensions never decided and always secretly understood, and this uncertainty excited vanity much more than any fixed distinction of ranks could have done: it was necessary to study all that composed the existence of man or woman, in order to know the sort of consideration that was due to them. In the habits, customs, and laws of France, there has always been something arbitrary in every sense; and thence it happens that the French have possessed, if we may use the expression, so great a pedantry of frivolity: the principal foundations not being secured, consistency was to be given to the smallest details. In England, originality is allowed to individuals, so well regulated is the mass! In France, the spirit of imitation is like a

bond of society; and it seems as if every thing would fall into confusion if this bond did not supply the instability of establishments.

In Germany, every body keeps his rank, his place in society, as if it were his established post, and there is no occasion for dexterous turns, parentheses, half-expressions, to shew the advantages of birth or of title which a man thinks he possesses above his neighbour. Good company in Germany, is the court; in France it consisted of all who could put themselves on an equality with the court; and every man might hope it, and every man also fear that he may never attain to it. Hence it resulted, that each individual wished to possess the manners of that society. In Germany you obtained admission by patent; in France, an error of taste expelled you from it; and men were even more eager to resemble the *gens du monde* than to distinguish themselves, in that same world, by their personal merit.

An aristocratical ascendency, fashion, and elegance, obtained the advantage over energy, learning, sensibility, understanding itself. It said to energy,—You attach too

much interest to persons and things:—to learning, You take up too much of my time:—to sensibility, You are too exclusive:—to understanding, You are too individual a distinction. Advantages were required that should depend more on manners than ideas, and it was of more importance to recognize in a man the class to which he belonged than the merit he possessed. This sort of equality in inequality is very favourable to people of mediocrity, for it must necessarily destroy all originality in the mode of seeing and expressing one's self. The chosen model is noble, agreeable, and in good taste, but it is the same for all. This model is a point of re-union; in conforming to it every body imagines himself more associated with others. A Frenchman would grow as much tired of being alone in his opinion as of being alone in his room.

The French do not deserve to be accused of flattering power from the calculations which generally inspire this flattery; they go where all the world goes, through evil report or good report, no matter which; if a few make themselves pass for the mul-

titude, they are sure that the multitude will shortly follow them. The French revolution in 1789 was effected by sending a courier from village to village to cry, "Arm "yourselves: for the neighbouring village "is in arms already;" and so all the world found itself risen up against all the world, or rather against nobody. If you spread a report that such a mode of viewing things is universally received, you would obtain unanimity, in spite of private opinions; you would then keep the secret of the comedy, for every one would in private confess that all are wrong. In secret scrutinies the deputies have been seen to give their white or black ball contrary to their opinion, only because they believed the majority to be of different sentiments from their own, and because, as they said, they would not throw away their vote.

It is by this necessity imposed in society of thinking like other people, that the contrast of courage in war and pusillanimity in civil life, so often displayed during the revolution, may be best explained. There is but one mode of thinking with respect to military courage: but public opinion

may be bewildered as to the conduct to be pursued in political life. You are threatened with the censure of those around you, with solitude, with desertion, if you decline to follow the ruling party; but in the armies there is no other alternative but that of death or distinction, a dazzling situation for the Frenchman, who never fears the one, and passionately loves the other. Set fashion, or applause, on the side of danger, and you will see the Frenchman brave it in every form; the social spirit exists in France from the highest to the lowest, it is necessary to hear one's self approved by one's neighbours: nobody will at any price expose himself to censure or ridicule; for, in a country where conversation has so much influence, the noise of words often drowns the voice of conscience.

We know the story of that man who began by praising with enthusiasm an actress he had just heard; he perceived a smile on the lips of those near him, and softened his eulogium; the obstinate smile did not withdraw itself, and the fear of ridicule made him conclude by saying, *Ma foi! The poor devil did all that she could.* The

triumphs of pleasantry are continually renewed in France; at one time it is thought fit to be religious, at another, the contrary; at one time to love one's wife, at another to appear no where in her company. There have been moments even, in which men have feared to pass for idiots if they evinced the least humanity; and this terror of ridicule, which in the higher classes generally discovers itself only in vanity, is transformed into ferocity in the lower.

What mischief would not this spirit of imitation do among the Germans! Their superiority consists in the independence of spirit, the love of retirement, and individual originality. The French are all-powerful only *en masse*, and their men of genius themselves always rest on received opinions when they mean to push onward beyond them. In short, the impatience of the French character, so attractive in conversation, would deprive the Germans of the principal charm of their natural imagination, that calm reverie, that deep contemplation, which calls in the aid of time and perseverance, to discover all things.

These are qualities almost incompatible

with vivacity of spirit; and yet that vivacity is what above all things renders conversation delightful. When an argument tires, or a tale grows tedious, you are seized with I know not what impatience, similar to that which is experienced when a musician slackens the measure of an air. It is possible, nevertheless, to fatigue by vivacity even as much as by prolixity. I once knew a man of much understanding, but so impatient, as to make all who talked with him feel the same sort of uneasiness that long-winded people experience when they perceive that they are fatiguing. This man would jump upon a chair while you were talking to him, finish your sentences for you that they might not be too long; he first made you uneasy, and ended by stunning you: for, however quick you may be in conversation, when it is impossible to retrench any further, except upon what is necessary, thoughts and feelings oppress you for want of room to unfold them.

All modes of saving time are not successful; and a single sentence may be made tedious by leaving it full of emptiness: the talent of expressing one's thoughts with brilliancy and rapidity is that which an-

swers best in society, where there is no time to wait for any thing. No reflection, no compliance, can make people amuse themselves with what confers no amusement. The spirit of conquest and the despotism of success must be there exerted; for the end and aim being little, you cannot console yourself for reverses by the purity of your motives, and good intention goes for nothing in point of spirit.

The narrative talent, one of the principal charms of conversation, is very rare in Germany; the hearers there are too complaisant, they do not grow tired soon enough, and the narrators, relying on their patience, are too much at ease in their recitals. In France, every speaker is an usurper surrounded by jealous rivals, who must maintain his post by dint of success; in Germany, he is a lawful possessor, who may peaceably enjoy his acknowledged rights.

The Germans succeed better in poetical than in epigrammatic tales; when the imagination is to be addressed, one may be pleased by details which render the picture more real; but when a bon mot is to be repeated, the preamble cannot be too much shortened. Pleasantry alleviates for a

moment the load of life: you like to see a man, your equal, playing with the burthen which weighs you down; and, animated by his example, you will soon begin to lighten it in your turn: but, when you discover effort or languor in that which ought to be only amusement, it fatigues you more than seriousness itself, where you are at least interested in the results.

The honesty of the German character is, perhaps, an obstacle in the way of narration: the Germans have a gaiety of disposition, rather than of mind; they are gay, as they are honest, for the satisfaction of their consciences, and laugh at what they say a long while before they have even dreamed of making others laugh at it.

Nothing, on the contrary, is equal to the charm of a recital in the mouth of a Frenchman of sense and taste. He foresees every thing, he manages every thing, and yet sacrifices nothing that can possibly be productive of interest. His physiognomy, less marked than that of the Italians, indicates gaiety, without losing any thing of the dignity of deportment and manners: he stops

when he likes, and never exhausts even amusement; though animated, he constantly holds in his hand the reins of his judgment, to conduct him with safety and dispatch; in a short time, also, his hearers join in the conversation; he then calls out, in his turn, those who have been just applauding him, and suffers not a single happy expression to drop, without taking it up—not an agreeable pleasantry, without perceiving it; and, for a moment at least, they delight and enjoy one another, as if all were concord, union, and sympathy in the world.

The Germans would do well to avail themselves, in essential matters, of some of the advantages of the spirit of society in France: the Germans might learn from the French to shew themselves less irritable in little circumstances, that they may reserve all their strength for great ones; they might learn from the French not to confound obstinacy with energy, rudeness with firmness; they might also, since they are capable of the entire sacrifice of their lives, abstain from recovering them in detail by a sort of minute personality, which even selfishness itself would not admit; to conclude, they might draw

out of the very art of conversation the habit of shedding over their literary compositions that luminous effect, which would bring them within the comprehension of most men—that talent of abridgment, invented by people who practice amusement much more than business—and that respect for certain decencies, which does not require any sacrifice of nature, but only the management of the imagination. They would perfect their style of writing by some of the observations to which the talent of conversation gives birth: but they would be in the wrong to pretend to that talent such as the French possess it.

A great city, that might serve as a rallying point, would be useful to Germany, in collecting together the means of study, in augmenting the resources of the arts, and exciting emulation; but if this metropolis should bring forth, in the Germans, the taste for the pleasures of society, in all their elegance, they would thus become losers in that scrupulous integritry—that labour in solitude—that hardy independence, which distinguishes their literary

and philosophical career; in short, they would change their meditative habits for an external vivacity, of which they would never acquire the grace and the dexterity.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the German Language, in its Effects upon the Spirit of Conversation.

In studying the spirit and character of a language, we learn the philosophical history of the opinions, manners, and habits of nations; and the modifications to which language submits, ought to throw considerable light on the progress of thought: but such an analysis would necessarily be very metaphysical, and would require a great deal of learning that is almost always wanting to us in the understanding of foreign languages, and very frequently in that of our own. We must then confine ourselves to the general impression, produced by the idiom of a people in its present existing state. The French,

having been spoken more generally than any other European dialect, is at once polished by use and sharp-edged for effect. No language is more clear and rapid, none indicates more lightly or explains more clearly what you wish to say. The German accommodates itself much less easily to the precision and rapidity of conversation. By the very nature of its grammatical construction, the sense is usually not understood till the end of the sentence. Thus the pleasure of interrupting, which, in France, gives so much animation to discussion, and forces one to utter so quickly all that is of importance to be heard, this pleasure cannot exist in Germany; for the beginnings of sentences signify nothing without the end, every man must be left in possession of all the space he chooses to demand: this is better for the purpose of getting to the bottom of things; it is also more civil, but it is less animated.

The politeness of the Germans is more sincere, but less varied than that of the French; it has more consideration for rank, and more precaution in all things. In France, they flatter more than they hu-

mour, and, as they possess the art of expressing every thing, they approach much more willingly to the most delicate subjects. The German is a language very brilliant in poetry, very copious in metaphysics, but very positive in conversation. The French language, on the contrary, is truly rich only in those turns of expression which designate the most complicated relations of society. It is poor and circumscribed in all that depends on imagination and philosophy. The Germans are more afraid of giving pain than desirous of pleasing. Thence it follows, that they have, as far as possible, subjected their politeness to rule; and their language, so bold in their works, is singularly enslaved in conversation, by all the forms with which it is loaded.

I remember having been present, in Saxony, at a metaphysical lecture given by a celebrated philosopher, who always quoted the Baron de Leibnitz, and never did he suffer himself to be led in the ardour of haranguing to suppress the title of this Baron, which suited but badly with the name of a great man, who died nearly a century ago.

The German is better adapted for poetry

than prose, and its prose is better in writing than in speaking; it is an instrument which answers very well when one desires to describe or to unfold every thing; but we cannot, in German, as in French, glide over the different subjects that present themselves. To endeavour to adapt German phrases to the train of French conversation, is to strip them of all grace and dignity. The great merit of the Germans is that of filling up their time well; the art of the French is to make it pass unnoticed.

Though the meaning of German periods is often not to be caught till the end, the construction does not always admit of a phrase being terminated by its most striking expression; and yet this is one of the great means of producing effect in conversation. The Germans seldom understand what we call bons mots: it is the substance of the thought itself, not the brilliancy communicated to it, that is to be admired.

The Germans imagine that there is a sort of quackery in a brilliant expression, and prefer the abstract sentiment, because it is more scrupulous and approaches nearer to the very essence of truth; but conversation

ought to give no trouble either in understanding or speaking. From the moment that the subject of discourse ceases to bear on the common interests of life, and that we enter into the sphere of ideas, conversation in Germany becomes too metaphysical; there is not enough intermediate space between the vulgar and the sublime; and yet it is in that intermediate space that the art of conversation finds exercise.

The German language possesses a gaiety peculiar to itself; society has not rendered it timid, and good morals have left it pure: yet it is a national gaiety, within reach of all classes of people. The grotesque sound of the words, their antiquated naïveté, communicate something of the picturesque to pleasantry, from which the common people can derive amusement equally with those of the higher orders. The Germans are less restricted in their choice of expressions than we are, because their language not having been so frequently employed in the conversation of the great world, it is not, like ours, composed of words which a mere accident, an application, or an allusion may render ridiculous; of words, in short, which,

having gone through all the adventures of society, are proscribed, unjustly perhaps, but yet so that they can never again be admitted. Anger is often expressed in German, but they have not made it the weapon of raillery, and the words which they make use of are still in all their force and all their directness of signification; this is an additional facility: but, on the other hand, one can express with the French language a thousand nice observations, a thousand turns of address, of which the German is till now incapable.

We should compare ourselves with ideas in German, with persons in French; the German may assist us in exploring, the French brings us directly to the end; the one should be used in painting nature, the other in painting manners. Goëthe, in his romance of *Wilhelm Meister*, makes a German woman say that she perceives her lover wishes to abandon her because he writes to her in French. There are in fact many phrases in our language by which we may speak without saying any thing, by which we may give hopes without promising, and promise without binding. The German is less flexible,

and it does well to remain so: for nothing inspires greater disgust than their Teutonic tongue when it is perverted to the purposes of falsehood, of whatever nature it may be. Its prolix construction, its multiplied consonants, its learned grammar, refuse to allow it any grace in suppleness; and it may be said to rise up in voluntary resistance to the intention of him who speaks it, from the moment that he designs to employ it in betraying the interests of truth.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Northern Germany.

THE first impressions that are received on arriving in the north of Germany, above all in the middle of the winter, are extremely gloomy; and I am not surprised that these impressions have hindered most Frenchmen, who have been banished to this country, from observing it without prejudice. The frontier of the Rhine has something solemn in it. One fears, in crossing it, to hear this terrible sentence,—*You are out of France.* —It is in vain that the understanding would pass an impartial judgment on the land that has given us birth; our affections never detach themselves from it; and, when we are forced to quit it, existence seems to be

torn up by the roots, and we become strangers to ourselves. The most simple habits as well as the most intimate relations, the most important interests as well as the most trifling employments—all once centred in our native country, and all now belong to it no more. We meet nobody who can speak to us of times past, nobody to attest to us the identity of former days with those that are present; our destiny begins again without the confidence of our early years being renewed: we change our world without experiencing any change in our heart. Thus banishment operates as a sentence of self survival; our adieus, our separations—all seem like the moment of death itself, and yet we assist at them with all the energies of life full within us.

I was, six years ago, upon the banks of the Rhine, waiting for the vessel that was to convey me to the opposite shore; the weather was cold, the sky obscure, and all seemed to announce to me some fatal presage. When the soul is violently disturbed by sorrow, we can hardly persuade ourselves that nature herself is indifferent to it; men

may be permitted to attribute some influence to their griefs; it is not pride, it is confidence in the pity of heaven. I was uneasy about my children, though they were not yet of an age to feel those emotions of the soul, which cast terror upon all surrounding objects. My French servants grew impatient at German sluggishness, and were surprised at not making themselves understood in the language, which they imagined to be the only one admitted in all civilized countries. There was an old German woman in the passage-boat, sitting in a little cart, from which she would not alight even to cross the river. "You are very quiet," I said to her—"Yes," answered she, "why should "I make a noise?" These simple words struck me? Why, in truth, should we make a noise! But even were entire generations to pass through life in silence, still misery and death would not the less await them, or be the less able to reach them.

On reaching the opposite shore, I heard the horns of the postilions, seeming by their harsh and discordant tones to announce a sad

departure for a sad abode. The earth was covered with snow; the houses bored with little windows, out of which peeped the heads of some inhabitants, disturbed by the sound of carriage-wheels in the midst of their monotonous employments; a sort of contrivance, for moving the bar at the turnpike, dispenses with the necessity of the toll-gatherer's leaving his house, to receive the toll from travellers. All is calculated for immobility; and the man who thinks, and he whose existence is merely material, both are alike insensible to all external distraction.

Fields deserted, houses blackened by smoke, gothic churches, are all so many preparatives for stories of ghosts and witches. The commercial cities of Germany are large and well built; but they afford no idea of what constitutes the glory and interest of the country—its literary and philosophical spirit. Mercantile interests are enough to unfold the understanding of the French, and in France some amusing society may still be met with in a town merely commercial; but the Germans, eminently capable of abstract studies,

treat business, when they employ themselves about it, with so much method and heaviness, that they seldom collect from it any general ideas whatever. They carry into trade the honesty which distinguishes them; but they give themselves up so entirely to what they are about, that they seek in society nothing more than a jovial relaxation, and indulge themselves, now and then, in a few gross pleasantries, only to divert themselves. Such pleasantries overwhelm the French with sadness; for they resign themselves much more willingly to grave and monotonous dulness, than to that witty sort of dulness which comes, slowly and familiarly, clapping its paws on your shoulder.

The Germans have great universality of spirit in literature and in philosophy, but none whatever in business. They always consider it partially, and employ themselves with it in a manner almost mechanical. It is the contrary in France: the spirit of business is there much more enlarged, and universality is admitted neither in literature nor in philosophy. If a learned man were a poet, or a poet learned, he would become

suspected among us, both by learned men and poets; but it is no rare thing to meet in the most simple merchant, with luminous perceptions on the political and military interests of his country. From thence it follows, that in France, there are many men of wit, and a smaller number of people of reflection. In France, they study men, in Germany, books. Ordinary faculties are sufficient to interest one in speaking of men; but it requires almost genius itself to discover a soul and an impulse in books. Germany can interest only those who employ themselves about past events, and abstract ideas. The present and the real belong to France; and, until a new order of things shall arise, she does not appear disposed to renounce those departments.

I think I am not endeavouring to conceal the inconveniencies of Germany. Even those small towns of the north, where we meet with men of such lofty conceptions, often present no kind of amusement, no theatre, little society; time falls, drop by drop, and no sound disturbs the reflections of solitude. The smallest towns in England

partake of the character of a free state, in sending their deputies to treat of the interests of the nation. The smaller towns of France bear some analogy to the capital, the centre of so many wonders. Those of Italy rejoice in the bright sky and the fine arts, which shed their rays over all the country. In the north of Germany, there is no representative government, no great metropolis; and the severity of the climate, the mediocrity of fortune, and the seriousness of character, would combine to render existence very irksome, if the force of thought had not set itself free from all these insipid and narrowing circumstances. The Germans have found the means of creating to themselves a republic of letters, at once animated and independent. They have supplied the interests of events by the interest of ideas. They can do without a centre, because all tend to the same object, and their imagination multiplies the small number of beauties which art and nature are able to afford them.

The citizens of this ideal republic, disengaged for the most part from all sort of

connexion either with public or private business, work in the dark like miners; and, placed like them in the midst of buried treasures, they silently dig out the intellectual riches of the human race.

CHAPTER XIV.

Saxony.

SINCE the Reformation, the princes of the house of Saxony have always granted to letters the most noble of protections—independence. It may be said without fear, that in no country of the earth does there exist such general instruction as in Saxony, and in the north of Germany. It is there that Protestantism had its birth, and the spirit of inquiry has there maintained itself ever since in full vigour.

During the last century, the electors of Saxony have been Catholics; and, though they have remained faithful to the oath, which obliged them to respect the worship of their subjects, this difference of religion

between prince and people has given less of political unity to the state. The electors, kings of Poland, were more attached to the arts than to literature; to which, though they did not molest it, they were strangers. Music is generally cultivated throughout Saxony; in the gallery of Dresden are collected together chefs-d'œuvre for the imitation of artists. The face of nature, in the neighbourhood of the capital, is extremely picturesque; but society does not afford there higher pleasures than in the rest of Germany: the elegance of a court is wanting; its ceremoniousness only finds an easy establishment.

From the quantity of works that are sold at Leipsic, we may judge of the number of readers of German publications; artizans of all classes, even stone-cutters, are often to be seen, resting from their labours, with a book in their hands. It cannot be imagined in France to what a degree knowledge is diffused over Germany. I have seen innkeepers, and turnpikemen, well versed in French literature. In the very villages, we meet with professors of Greek and Latin. There is not a small town without a decent

library; and almost every place boasts of some men, worthy of remark for their talents or information. If we were to set ourselves about comparing, in this respect, the French provinces with Germany, we should be apt to believe that the two nations were three centuries distant from each other. Paris, uniting in its bosom the whole flower of the empire, takes from the remainder every sort of interest.

Picard and Kotzebue have composed two very pretty pieces, both entitled *The Country Town (La Petite Ville)*. Picard represents the provincials as incessantly aping Parisian manners, and Kotzebue the citizens of his little community, delighted with and proud of the place they inhabit, which they believe to be incomparable. The different nature of the ridicule gives a good idea of the difference of manners. In Germany, every residence is an empire to its inhabitant; his imagination, his studies, or perhaps his mere good-nature, aggrandize it before his eyes; every body knows how to make the best of himself in his little circle. The importance they attach to every thing affords matter of pleasantry; but this very im-

portance sets a value upon small resources. In France, nobody is interested out of Paris; and with reason, for Paris is all France; and one who has lived only in the country can have not the slightest notion of that which characterizes this illustrious nation.

The distinguished men of Germany, not being brought together in the same place, seldom see each other, and communicate only by writing; every one makes his own road, and is continually discovering new districts in the vast region of antiquity, metaphysics, and science. What is called study in Germany is truly admirable: fifteen hours a day of solitude and labour, for several years in succession, appear to them a natural mode of existence; the very ennui of society gives animation to a life of retirement.

The most unbounded freedom of the press existed in Saxony; but the government was not in any manner endangered by it, because the minds of literary men did not turn towards the examination of political institutions; solitude tends to deliver men up to abstract speculations or to

poetry: one must live in the very focus of human passions, to feel the desire of employing and directing them to one's own purposes. The German writers occupied themselves only with theoretical doctrines, with scholastic learning, and literary and philosophical research; and the powerful of this world have nothing to apprehend from such studies: besides, although the government of Saxony was not free by right, that is, representation, yet it was virtually free through the habits of the nation, and the moderation of its princes.

The honesty of the inhabitants was such, that a proprietor at Leipsic having fixed on an apple-tree (which he had planted on the borders of the public walk) a notice, desiring that people would not gather the fruit, not a single apple was stolen from it for ten years. I have seen this apple-tree with a feeling of respect; had it been the tree of the Hesperides, they would no more have touched its golden fruit than its blossom.

Saxony was profoundly tranquil: they sometimes made a noise there about cer-

tain ideas, but without ever thinking of applying them. One would have said that thought and action were made to have no reference to each other, and that truth, among the Germans, resembled the statue of Hermes, without hands to seize, or feet to advance. Yet is there nothing so respectable as these peaceful triumphs of reflection, which continually occupied a set of insulated individuals, without wealth, without power, and connected together only by modes of worship and thinking.

In France, men never occupied themselves about abstract truths, except in their relation to practice. To perfect the art of government, to encourage population by a wise political economy—such were the objects of philosophical labour, especially in the last century. This mode of employing time is also very respectable; but, in the scale of reflection, the dignity of the human race is of greater importance than its happiness, and, still more, than its increase: to multiply human births without ennobling the destiny of man, is

only to prepare a more sumptuous banquet for death.

The literary towns of Saxony are those in which the most benevolence and simplicity predominate. Every where else, literature has been considered as the appendage of luxury; in Germany, it seems to exclude it. The tastes which it engenders produce a sort of innocence and timidity favourable to the love of domestic life; not that the vanity of authorship is without a very marked character among the Germans, but it does not attach itself to the triumph of society. The most inconsiderable writer looks to posterity for his reward; and, unfolding himself at his ease in the space of boundless meditations, is less rubbed by other men, and less embittered against them. Still, there is too wide a separation in Saxony between men of letters and statesmen, to allow the display of any true public spirit. From this separation it results, that among the first there is too much ignorance of affairs to permit them any ascendancy over the nation, and that the latter pride themselves

in a sort of docile Machiavelism, which smiles at all generous feelings, as at the simplicity of a child, and seems to indicate to them, that they are not fit for this world.

CHAPTER XV.

Weimar.

Of all the German principalities, there is none that makes us feel so much as Weimar the advantages of a small state, of which the sovereign is a man of strong understanding, and who is capable of endeavouring to please all orders of his subjects; without losing any thing in their obedience. Such a state is as a private society, where all the members are connected together by intimate relations. The Duchess Louisa of Saxe Weimar is the true model of a woman destined by nature to the most illustrious rank; without pretension, as without weakness, she inspires, in the same degree, confidence and respect; and the heroism of

the chivalrous ages has entered her soul without taking from it any thing of her sex's softness. The military talents of the duke are universally respected, and his lively and reflective conversation continually brings to our recollection, that he was formed by the great Frederic. It is by his own and his mother's reputation that the most distinguished men of learning have been attracted to Weimar. Germany, for the first time, possessed a literary metropolis; but, as this metropolis was, at the same time, only an inconsiderable town, its ascendancy was merely that of superior illumination; for fashion, which imposes uniformity in all things, could not emanate from so narrow a circle.

Herder was just dead when I arrived at Weimar; but Wieland, Goëthe, and Schiller, were still there. I shall paint each of these men separately in the following section: I shall paint them, above all, by their works; for their writings are the perfect resemblances of their character and conversation. This very rare concordance is a proof of sincerity: when the first object in writing is to produce an effect upon others, a man

never displays himself to them, such as he is in reality; but, when he writes to satisfy an internal inspiration, which has obtained possession of the soul, he discovers, by his works, even without intending it, the very slightest shades of his manner of thinking and acting.

The residence of country towns has always appeared to me very irksome. The understanding of the men is narrowed, the heart of the women frozen, there; people live so much in each other's presence, that one is oppressed by one's equals; it is no longer this distant opinion, the reverberation of which animates you from afar, like the report of glory; it is a minute inspection of all the actions of your life—an observation of every detail, which prevents the general character from being comprehended; and, the more you have of independence and elevation of mind, the less able you are to breathe amidst so many little impediments. This painful constraint did not exist at Weimar; it was rather a large palace than a little town; a select circle of society, which made its interest consist in the discussion of all the novel-

ties of art and science: women, the amiable scholars of some superior men, were constantly speaking of the new literary works, as of the most important public events. They enjoyed the whole universe by reading and study; they freed themselves, by the enlargement of the mind, from the restraint of circumstances: they forgot the private anecdotes of each individual, in habitually reflecting together on those great questions, which influence the destiny common to all alike. And in this society there were none of those provincial wonders, who so easily mistake contempt for grace, and affectation for elegance.

In the same principality, in the immediate neighbourhood of this first literary reunion of Germany, was Jena, one of the most remarkable centres of science. Thus, in a very narrow space, there seemed to be collected together all the astonishing lights of the human understanding.

The imagination, constantly kept awake at Weimar by the conversation of poets, felt less need of outward distractions; these distractions serve to lighten the burthen of existence, but often disperse its powers.

In this country residence, called a city, they led a regular, occupied, and serious life; one might sometimes feel weary of it, but the mind was never degraded by futile and vulgar interests; and if pleasures were wanting, the decay of faculties was at least never perceived.

The only luxury of the prince is a delicious garden; and this popular enjoyment, which he shares in common with all the inhabitants of the place, is a possession on which he is congratulated by all. The stage, of which I shall speak in the second division of my work, is managed by the greatest poet in Germany, Goëthe: and this amusement interests all people sufficiently to preserve them from those assemblies, which answer no other end than to bring concealed ennui to light. Weimar was called the Athens of Germany; and it was, in reality, the only place where the fine arts inspired a national interest, which served for a bond of fraternal union among different ranks of society. A liberal court habitually sought the acquaintance of men of letters; and literature gained considerably in the influence of good taste which

presided there. A judgment might be formed, from this little circle, of the good effect which might be produced throughout Germany by such a mixture, if generally adopted.

CHAPTER XVI.

Prussia.

In order to be acquainted with Prussia, you must study the character of Frederic II. This empire, disfavoured by nature, and which has become a power only through the influence of a warlike master, was created by an individual. In Frederic the Second we behold two distinct persons; a German by nature, and a Frenchman by education. All that the German effected in a German nation has left durable traces; all that the Frenchman attempted has failed of producing fruit.

Frederic the Second was fashioned by the French philosophy of the eighteenth century: this philosophy does injury to nations, when it dries up in them the

source of enthusiasm: but where there exists such a thing as an absolute monarch, it is to be wished that liberal principles may temper in him the action of despotism. Frederic introduced into the north of Germany the liberty of thinking; the reformation had already introduced there the spirit of inquiry, though not of toleration; and, by a singular contradiction, inquiry was only permitted in imperiously prescribing, by anticipation, the result of that inquiry. Frederic caused to be held in honour the liberty of speaking and writing, not only by means of those poignant and witty pleasantries, which have so much effect on men when proceeding from the lips of a king; but also, still more powerfully, by his example; for he never punished those who libelled him, whether in speech or by publication, and he displayed in almost all his actions the philosophy whose spirit he professed.

He established an order and an economy in the administration, which has constituted the internal strength of Prussia, in spite of all its natural disadvantages. There was never a king who displayed so much simplicity in

his private life, and even in his court: he thought himself bound to spare as much as possible the wealth of his subjects. He entertained on all subjects a feeling of justice, which the misfortunes of his youth and the severity of his father had engraved on his heart: this feeling is perhaps the most rare of all a conqueror's virtues: for they in general would rather be esteemed generous than just, because justice supposes some sort of equal relation with others.

Frederic had rendered the courts of justice so independent, that, during his whole life, and under the reign of his successors, they have been often seen to decide in favour of the subject against the sovereign on matters relating to political interests. It is true that it would be impossible to introduce injustice into a German tribunal. The Germans are well enough disposed to make themselves systems, to abandon the care of politics to arbitrary power; but in questions of law or administration, you cannot instil into their heads any principles but those of justice. Their very spirit of method, to say nothing of their uprightness of heart, secures equity by the

establishment of order in all things. Still, however, Frederic deserves praise for his integrity in the internal government of his country; and this is one of his best titles to the admiration of posterity.

Frederic did not possess a feeling heart, but he had goodness of disposition; and qualities of an universal nature are those which are most suitable to sovereigns. Nevertheless, this goodness of Frederic's was as dangerous as that of the lion, and one felt the talon of power in the midst of the most amiable grace and coquetry of spirit. Men of independent characters could, with difficulty, submit themselves to the freedom which this master fancied he gave them, to the familiarity which he imagined that he permitted them; and, even in their admiration of him, they felt that they breathed more freely at a distance.

Frederic's greatest misfortune was, that he had not sufficient respect for religion or morals. His propensities were cynical, notwithstanding the love of glory had given an elevation to his ideas; his licentious mode of expressing himself on the most sacred subjects, was the cause that his very vir-

tues failed of inspiring confidence; they were felt and approved; yet they were believed to be the virtues of calculation. Every thing in Frederic appeared necessarily to imply a political tendency; thus, the good that he did ameliorated the state of the country, but did not improve the morality of the nation. He affected unbelief, and made a mockery of female virtue; and nothing was so unsuitable to the German character as this manner of thinking. Frederic, in setting his subjects free from what he called their prejudices, extinguished in them the spirit of patriotism: for, to attach inhabitants to countries, naturally gloomy and barren, they must be governed by opinions and principles of great severity. In those sandy regions, where the earth produces nothing but firs and heaths, man's strength consists in his soul; and if you take from him that which constitutes the life of this soul, his religious feelings, he will no longer feel any thing but disgust for his melancholy country.

Frederic's inclination for war may be excused by great political motives. His kingdom, such as he received it from his father,

could not have held together; and it was almost for its preservation that he aggrandized it. He had two millions and a half of subjects when he ascended the throne, and left six millions at his death. The need he had of an army prevented him from encouraging in the nation a public spirit of imposing energy and unity. The government of Frederic was founded on military strength and civil justice: he reconciled them to each other by his wisdom; but it was difficult to combine two spirits of a nature so opposite. Frederic wished his soldiers to be mere military machines, blindly actuated, and his subjects to be enlightened citizens, capable of patriotism. He did not establish in the towns of Prussia secondary authorities, municipalities such as existed in the rest of Germany, lest the immediate action of the military service might be impeded by them, and yet he wished that there should be enough of the spirit of liberty in his empire, to make obedience appear voluntary. He wished the military state to be the first of all, since it was that which was most necessary to him; but he would have desired that the civil state might support itself col-

laterally with the military. Frederic, in short, desired to meet every where with assistances, and to encounter obstacles no where.

The wonderful amalgamation of all classes of society is hardly to be obtained but through the influence of a system of laws, the same for all. "A man may combine "opposite elements, so as to make them pro- "ceed together in the same direction, but "at his death they are disunited."* The ascendant obtained by Frederic, and supported by the wisdom of his successors, was even yet manifested for a time; but in Prussia there were always to be perceived two distinct nations, badly united together, to form an entire one; the army, and the civil state. The prejudices of nobility subsisted at the same time with liberal opinions of the most decided stamp. In short, the figure of Prussia presented itself, like that of Janus, under a double face—the one military, the other philosophical.

One of the greatest errors committed by Frederic, was that of lending himself to

* Suppressed by the literary police.

the partition of Poland. Silesia had been acquired by the force of arms; Poland was a Machiavelian conquest, "and it could "never be hoped that subjects, so got by "slight of hand, would be faithful to the "juggler who called himself their sove- "reign."* Besides, the Germans and Sclavonians can never unite together by indissoluble ties; and, when a nation admits alien enemies into its bosom, as natural subjects, she does herself almost as much injury as in receiving them for masters: for the political body then no longer retains that bond of union, which identifies the state, and constitutes patriotic sentiment.

These observations respecting Prussia all bear upon the means which she possessed of maintaining and defending herself: for there was nothing in her internal government that was prejudicial to her independence, or her security; in no country of Europe was knowledge held in higher honour, or in none was liberty, at least in fact, if not by law, more scrupulously respected. I did not meet, throughout Prussia, with any indivi-

* Suppressed by the literary police.

dual that complained of arbitrary acts in the government, and yet there would not have been the least danger in complaining of them; but when, in a social state, happiness itself is only what may be called a fortunate accident, when it is not founded on durable institutions which secure to the human race its force and its dignity, patriotism has little perseverance, and men easily abandon to chance the advantages which are believed to be owing to chance alone. Frederic II. one of the noblest gifts of that chance which seemed to watch over the destiny of Prussia, had known how to make himself sincerely beloved in his country; and, since he is no more, they still cherish his memory as if he were still alive. The fate of Prussia, however, has but too well taught us what is the real influence even of a great man, who, during his reign, has not disinterestedly laboured to make his country independent of his personal services: the entire nation confidently relied on its sovereign for its very principle of existence, and it seemed as if that nation itself must come to an end with him.

Frederic II. would have wished to confine

all the literature of his dominions to French literature: he set no value on that of Germany. Doubtless it was, during his time, by many degrees short of having attained its present distinction; yet a German prince ought to encourage every thing German. Frederic formed the project of rendering Berlin in some respects similar to Paris, and flattered himself with having found among the French refugees some writers sufficiently distinguished to create a French world of literature. Such a hope was necessarily to be deceived; factitious culture never prospers: some individuals may struggle against the difficulties of nature; but the mass always follows the bent she gives them. Frederic did a real injury to his country by proclaiming his contempt for the genius of the Germans. It has thence resulted that the Germanic body has often conceived unjust suspicions against Prussia herself.

Many German writers, of deserved celebrity, made themselves known towards the end of Frederic's reign; but the unfavourable opinion, which this great monarch had imbibed in his youth against the literature of his country, was never effaced; and, a

few years before his death, he composed a little work, in which he proposes, among other changes, to add a vowel at the end of every verb, to soften the Teutonic dialect. This German, in an Italian mask, would produce the most comic effect in the world; but no monarch, even in the east, possesses so much power as to influence in this manner, not the sense but the sound of every word that shall be pronounced throughout his dominions.

Klopstock has nobly reproached Frederic with his having neglected the German muses, who, unknown to him, essayed to proclaim his glory. Frederic did not at all divine the real character of the Germans in literature and philosophy. He did not give them credit for being inventors. He wished to discipline men of letters as he did his armies. "We must conform ourselves," said he, in bad German, in his instructions to the academy, "to the method of Boerhaave "in medicine, to that of Locke in metaphy- "sics, and that of Thomasius in natural "philosophy." His instructions were not followed. He never doubted that, of all men, the Germans were those who were least

capable of being subjected to the routine of letters and philosophy: nothing announced in them that boldness which they have since displayed in the field of abstraction.

Frederic considered his subjects as strangers, and the Frenchmen of genius as his countrymen. Nothing, it must be confessed, is more natural than that he should have let himself be seduced by whatever was brilliant and solid in the French writers of this epoch: nevertheless Frederic would have contributed still more effectually to the glory of his country, if he had understood and developed the faculties peculiar to the nation he governed. But how resist the influence of his times? and where is the man, whose genius itself is not, in many respects, the work of the age he lives in?

CHAPTER XVII.

Berlin.

BERLIN is a large city, with very broad streets, perfectly straight, the houses handsome, and the general appearance regular: but, as it has been but lately rebuilt, it displays no traces of ancient times. Not one Gothic monument remains amidst its modern habitations; and nothing of the antique interrupts the uniformity of this newly created country. What can be better, it will be said, either for buildings or for institutions, than not to be encumbered with ruins? I feel that, in America, I should love new cities and new laws: there, nature and liberty speak so immediately to the soul, as to leave no want of recollections; but, in

this old world of ours, the past is needful to us.

Berlin, an entirely modern city, beautiful as it is, makes no serious impression; it discovers no marks of the history of the country, or of the character of its inhabitants, and its magnificent new-built houses seem destined only for the convenient assemblage of pleasures and industry. The finest palaces in Berlin are built of brick; hardly any stone is to be found even in its triumphal arches. The capital of Prussia resembles Prussia itself; its buildings and establishments are of the age of man, and no more, because a single man was their founder.

The court, over which a beautiful and virtuous queen presides, was at once imposing and simple; the royal family, which threw itself voluntarily into society, knew how to mix with dignity among the nation at large, and became identified in all hearts with their native country. The king had found the means of fixing at Berlin J. de Müller, Ancillon, Fichte, Humboldt, Hufeland, a multitude of men distinguished in different ways; in short, all the elements of a delightful society, and of a powerful nation,

were there; but these elements were not yet combined or united together. Genius was attended with much more success, however, at Berlin than at Vienna: the hero of the nation, Frederic, having been a man of uncommon brilliancy, the reflection of his name still inspired a love for every thing that resembled him. Maria Theresa did not give a similar impulse to the people of Vienna; and whatever, in Joseph, bore the least appearance of genius was sufficient to disgust them with it.

No spectacle in all Germany was equal to that which Berlin presented. This town, situated in the centre of the north of Germany, may be considered as its focus of illumination. Sciences and letters are cultivated there; and, at dinners, both ministerial and private, where the men meet together, the separation of ranks, so prejudicial to Germany, is not rigidly enforced, but people of talent of all classes are collected. This happy mixture is not yet, however, extended to the society of the women: there are among them some whose talents and accomplishments attract every thing that is distinguished to their circles; but, generally speaking, at Berlin,

as well as throughout the rest of Germany, female society is not well amalgamated with that of the men. The great charm of social life, in France, consists in the art of perfectly reconciling all the advantages, which the wit of the men and women united can confer upon conversation. At Berlin, the men rarely converse except with each other; the military condition gives them a sort of rudeness, which prevents them from taking any trouble about the society of women.

When there are, as in England, great political interests to be discussed, the societies of men are always animated by a noble feeling common to all; but, in countries where there is no representative government, the presence of the women is necessary, to preserve all the sentiments of delicacy and purity, without which the love of the beautiful must perish of itself. The influence of women is yet more salutary to the soldier than to the citizen; the empire of law can subsist without them, much better than that of honour: for they can alone preserve the spirit of chivalry in a monarchy purely military. Ancient France owed all

her splendour to this potency of public opinion, of which female ascendancy was the cause.

Society at Berlin consisted only of a very small number of men, a circumstance which almost always spoils the members of it by depriving them of the anxiety and of the necessity to please. Officers, who obtained leave of absence to pass a few months in town, sought nothing there but the dance or the gaming table. The mixture of two languages was detrimental to conversation, and the great assemblies at Berlin afforded no higher interest than those at Vienna; or rather, in point of manners, there was more of the custom of the world at the latter than at the former of those capitals. Notwithstanding this, the liberty of the press, the assemblage of men of genius, the knowledge of literature, and of the German language, which had been generally diffused of late, contributed to render Berlin the real metropolis of modern, of enlightened Germany. The French refugees somewhat weakened that entirely German impulse of which Berlin is susceptible; they still preserved a superstitious reverence for the age

of Louis XIV.; their ideas respecting literature became faded and petrified at a distance from the country which gave them birth; yet, in general, Berlin would have assumed a great ascendancy over public spirit in Germany, if there had not still continued to exist (I must repeat it) a feeling of resentment for the contempt which Frederic had evinced towards the German nation.

The philosophic writers have often indulged unjust prejudices against Prussia; they chose to see in her nothing but one vast military fortification, and yet it was in this very point of view that she was least worthy of observation; the interest which this country really deserved to excite, consisted in the illumination, the spirit of justice, and the sentiments of independence, which are to be met with in a number of individuals of all classes; but the bond of union of these noble qualities had not yet been formed. The newly-constructed state could derive no security, either from duration or from the character of the materials which composed it.

The humiliating punishments generally resorted to among the German soldiery, stifled

the sentiments of honour in the minds of the soldiers. Military habits have rather injured than assisted the warlike spirit of the Prussians: these habits were founded on those ancient maxims which separated the army from the body of the nation, while in our days, it has been discovered, that there is no real strength except in national character. This character, in Prussia, is more noble and more exalted than late events might lead us to imagine; "and the ardent heroism "of the unhappy Prince Louis ought still to "shed some glory over his companions in "arms."*

* Suppressed by the literary police.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the German Universities.

All the north of Germany is filled with the most learned universities in Europe. In no country, not even in England, have the people so many means of instructing themselves, and of bringing their faculties to perfection. How is it then that the nation is wanting in energy, that it appears generally dull and confined, even while it contains within itself a small number at least, of men, who are the most intellectual in all Europe? It is to the nature of its government, not to education, that this singular contrast must be attributed. Intellectual education is perfect in Germany, but every thing there passes into a theory: practical education depends

solely on things actually existing; it is by action alone that the character acquires that firmness which is necessary to direct the conduct of life. Character is an instinct; it has more alliance with nature than the understanding, and yet circumstances alone give men the opportunity of developing it. The government is the real instructor of the people; and public education itself, however beneficial, may create men of letters, but not citizens, warriors, or statesmen.

In Germany, the genius of philosophy goes further than any where else; nothing arrests its course; and even the want of a political career, so fatal to the mass, affords a freer scope to the thinking part of the nation. But there is an immense distance between the first and second orders of genius, because there is no interest, no object of exertion, for men who do not rise to the elevation of the most rash conceptions. In Germany, a man who is not occupied with the comprehension of the whole universe, has really nothing to do.

The German universities possess an ancient reputation of a date several ages antecedent

to the Reformation. Since that epoch, the Protestant universities have been incontestably superior to the Catholic, and the literary glory of Germany depends altogether upon these institutions.*

The English universities have singularly contributed to diffuse among the people of England that knowledge of ancient languages and literature, which gives to their orators and statesmen an information so liberal and so brilliant. It is a mark of good taste to be acquainted with other things besides matters of business, when one is thoroughly acquainted with them; and, besides, the eloquence of free nations attaches itself to the history of the Greeks and Romans, as to that of ancient fellow-countrymen. But the German universities, although founded on principles analogous to those of Oxford and Cambridge, yet

* A sketch of these institutions is presented to us in a work on the subject, just published by M. de Villers, an author, who is always found at the head of all noble and generous opinions; who seems called, by the elegance of his mind, and the depth of his studies, to be the representative of France in Germany, and of Germany in France.

differ from them in many respects: the multitude of students assembled together at Göttingen, Halle, Jena, &c. formed a kind of free body in the state: the rich and poor scholars were distinguished from each other only by personal merit; and the strangers, who repaired from all parts of the world, submitted themselves with pleasure to an equality, which natural superiority alone could disturb.

There was independence, and even military spirit, among the students; and if, in leaving the university, they had been able to devote themselves to the interests of the public, they had received an education very favourable to energy of character; but they returned to the monotonous and domestic habits which prevail in Germany, and lost by degrees the vigour and the resolution, which their university life had inspired. They retained nothing of it, but a stock of valuable and very extensive information.

In every German university, several professors concurred together in each individual branch of instruction; thus the masters themselves imbibed a principle of emu-

lation, from the interest which they felt in attaining a superiority over each other in the number of scholars they attracted. Those who adopted such, or such particular course, medicine, law, &c. found themselves naturally impelled to require information on other subjects; and thence follows the universality of acquirements, which is to be remarked in almost all the well-informed men of Germany. The universities had a separate property in their possessions like the clergy; they had a jurisdiction peculiar to themselves; and it was a noble idea of our ancestors, to lay open the bounds of instruction in all things. Mature age can submit itself to circumstances; but at the entrance into life, at least, a young man should draw all his ideas from an uncorrupted source.

The study of languages, which forms the basis of instruction in Germany, is much more favourable to the progress of the faculties in infancy, than that of the mathematics or of the physical sciences. Pascal, that great geometrician, whose profound reflection spread its wings over the science which chiefly occupied his atten-

tion, as over all the other sciences, has himself acknowledged the defects inseparable from the minds at first formed by the mathematics: this study, in early life, exercises only the mechanism of the understanding; children, who are employed so early in calculating, lose all that seed of the imagination which is then so fine and so fertile, and do not acquire, in its room, any transcendent correctness of mind: for arithmetic and algebra are confined to the making us acquainted, in a thousand different forms, with propositions which are always the same. The problems of life are more complicated; none are positive, none are absolute; we must guess, we must choose, by the help of perceptions and suppositions, which have no relation to the infallible progress of calculation.

Demonstrated truths do not lead to probable truths, the only ones which serve to direct us in business, in the arts, or in society. There is, indeed, a point, at which the mathematics themselves demand that luminous power of invention, without which we can never penetrate the secrets of nature. At the summit of human

thought the imagination of Homer and that of Newton seemed to meet; but how many children, without genius for the mathematics, are obliged to devote their whole time to that science! but one of their faculties is employed, though the whole moral being ought to be developed at a period when the soul may be so easily deranged as well as the body, by fortifying only one of its parts.

Nothing is less applicable to the conduct of life than a mathematical reasoning: a proposition in figures is decidedly either false or true; in all other relations, the true mixes itself with the false in such a manner, that often instinct alone can make us decide between different motives which are sometimes equally powerful on either side. The study of the mathematics, accustoming us to certainty, irritates us against all opinions opposite to our own; while that which is most important for our conduct in this world is to understand our fellow creatures, that is to say, to comprehend all that induces them to think or to feel differently from ourselves. The mathematics lead us to take no account

of any thing that is not proved; while primitive truths, those which are seized by feeling and genius, are not susceptible of demonstration.

To conclude, the mathematics, subjecting every thing to calculation, inspire too much reverence for force; and that sublime energy, which accounts obstacles as nothing, and delights itself in sacrifices, does not easily harmonize with the mode of reasoning which is developed by algebraic combinations.

It seems to me, then, that, for the advantage of morality as well as that of the understanding, the study of the mathematics should be taken in its course as a part of complete instruction, but not to form the basis of education, and consequently the determining principle of the character of his soul.

Among the several systems of education there are likewise some which advise us to begin the course of instruction with the natural sciences; in childhood they are only a simple diversion; they are learned rattles, which accustom us to methodical amusement and superficial study. People

have imagined that children should be spared trouble as much as possible, that all their studies should be turned into recreations, and that, in due time, collections of natural history should be given to them for play-things, and physical experiments for a show. It seems to me that this also is an erroneous system. Even if it were possible that a child should learn any thing well in amusing itself, I should still have to regret that its faculty of attention had not been developed—a faculty which is much more essential than one additional acquirement. I know they will tell me that the mathematics call forth, in a peculiar manner, the power of application; but they do not habituate the mind to compare, to appreciate, to concentrate: the attention which they demand is what we may call direct; the human understanding acts in mathematics like a spring which always follows the same bent.

Education, conducted by way of amusement, dissipates the reasoning powers; pain in all the concerns of life is one of the great secrets of nature: the understanding

of the child should accustom itself to the efforts of study, as our soul accustoms itself to suffering. It is labour which leads to the perfection of our earlier, as grief to that of our later age: it is to be wished, no doubt, that our parents, like our destiny, may not too much abuse this double secret; but there is nothing important in any stage of life but that which acts upon the very central point of existence, and we are too apt to consider the moral being in detail. You may teach your child a number of things with pictures and cards, but you will not teach him to learn; and the habit of amusing himself, which you direct to the acquirement of knowledge, will soon follow another course when the child is no longer under your guidance.

It is not, therefore, without reason that the study of the ancient and modern languages has been made the basis of all the establishments of education, which have formed the most able men throughout Europe. The sense of an expression in a foreign language is at once a grammatical and an intellectual problem; this problem is altogether proportioned to the under-

standing of a child: at first he understands only the words, then he ascends to the conception of the phrase, and soon after the charm of the expression, its force, its harmony; all the qualities which are united in the language of man, are gradually perceived by the child while engaged in translating; he makes a trial of himself with the difficulties which are presented to him by two languages at a time;—he introduces himself to the several ideas in succession, compares and combines different sorts of analogies and probabilities; and the spontaneous activity of the mind, that alone which truly develops the faculty of thought, is in a lively manner excited by this study; the number of faculties which it awakens at the same time, gives it the advantage over every other species of labour; and we are too happy in being able to employ the flexible memory of a child, in retaining a sort of information, without which he would be all his life confined to the circle of his own nation; a circle narrow like every thing which is exclusive.

The study of grammar requires the same

connexion and the same force of attention as the mathematics, but it is much more closely connected with thought. Grammar unites ideas, as calculation combines figures; grammatical logic is equally precise with that of algebra, and at the same time it applies itself to every thing that is alive in the mind: words are at the same time ciphers and images; they are both slaves and free; at the same time subject to the discipline of syntax, and all powerful by their natural signification: thus we find in the metaphysics of grammar, exactness of reasoning and independence of thought united; every thing has passed by means of words, and every thing is again found in words when we know how to examine them: languages are inexhaustible for the child as well as for the man, and every one may draw from them whatever he stands in need of. The impartiality which is natural to the spirit of the Germans, leads them to take an interest in the literature of foreign countries, and we find few men a little elevated above the common herd who are not familiar with several languages: on leaving school they are

in general already well acquainted with Latin and even with Greek. The education of the German universities, says a French writer, begins where that of most nations in Europe ends. Not only the professors are men of astonishing information; but what distinguishes them above all things, is, their extreme scrupulousness in the art of instruction. In Germany, men have a conscience in every thing, and there is nothing that can dispense with it.—If we examine the course of human destiny, we shall see that levity of disposition may lead to every thing that is bad in the world. It is only in childhood that levity has a charm; it seems as if the Creator still led the child by the hand, and assisted him to tread gently over the clouds of life; but when time abandons man to himself, it is only in the seriousness of his soul that he can find reflection, sentiment, and virtue.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of particular Institutions for Education, and Charitable Establishments.

It will at first sight appear inconsistent to praise the ancient method, which made the study of languages the basis of education, and at the same time to consider the school of Pestalozzi as one of the best institutions of our age; I think, however, that both these means of viewing the subject may be reconciled. Of all studies, that which with Pestalozzi produces the most satisfactory result, is the mathematics. But it appears to me that his method might be applied to many other branches of education, and produce certain and rapid improvement. Rousseau was per-

suaded that children, before the age of twelve or thirteen, had not an understanding equal to the studies that were exacted from them, or rather to the method of instruction to which they were subjected. They repeated without comprehending, they laboured without gaining instruction, and they frequently gathered nothing from their education but the habit of performing their task without understanding it, and of evading the power of the master by the cunning of the scholar. All that Rousseau has said against this routine of education is perfectly true; but, as it often happens, the remedy which he proposes is still worse than the evil itself.

A child who, according to Rousseau's system, had learned nothing till he was twelve years old, would have lost six of the most valuable years of his life; his intellectual organs would never acquire that flexibility, which early infancy alone could give them. Habits of idleness would be so deeply rooted in him, that he would be rendered much more unhappy by speaking to him of industry for the first time at the age of twelve, than by accustoming

him, from his earliest existence, to consider it as a necessary condition of life. Besides, that kind of care and attention which Rousseau expects from the tutor as a substitute for instruction, and to render it at length necessarily effective, would oblige every man to devote his whole life to the education of another being, and grandfathers alone would find themselves at liberty to begin their own personal career. Such projects are chimerical; but Pestalozzi's method is real, of easy application, and may have a great influence on the future progress of the human mind.

Rousseau says, with much reason, that children do not comprehend what they learn, and he concludes from thence, that they ought to learn nothing. Pestalozzi has profoundly studied the cause of this want of comprehension in children, and by his method ideas are simplified and graduated so as to be brought to the level of childhood, and the understanding common to that age may acquire, without fatiguing itself, the results of the deepest study; in passing with exactness, and by degrees, through all the powers of the reasoning

faculty, Pestalozzi places the child in a situation to discover himself, what he wishes to teach him.

There are no half measures in Pestalozzi's method: they either understand well, or not at all; for all the propositions follow each other so closely, that the second is always the immediate consequence of the first. Rousseau says, that the minds of children are fatigued by the studies which are exacted from them. Pestalozzi always leads them by a road so easy and yet so determinate, that it costs them no more to be initiated into the most abstract sciences, than into the most simple occupations; that which wearies children is the making them skip over the intermediate steps, and obliging them to get forward without their knowing what they think they have learned: their heads are then in a state of confusion, which renders all examination formidable, and inspires them with an invincible disgust to learning. There exists no trace of this sort of inconvenience in the method of Pestalozzi. Children amuse themselves with their studies, not that they are given to them as a play, which, as I have already

said, mixes ennui with pleasure, and frivolity with study, but because they enjoy from their infancy the pleasure of grown men, which is that of comprehending and finishing what they are set about.

The method of Pestalozzi, like every thing else that is truly good, is not entirely a new discovery, but an enlightened and persevering application of truths already known. Patience, observation, and a philosophical study of the proceedings of the human mind, have given him a knowledge of what is elementary in thoughts, and successive in their development; and he has pushed farther than any other the theory and the practice of gradation, in the art of instruction. His method has been applied with success to grammar, geography, and music; but it is much to be desired that those distinguished professors, who have adopted his principles, would render them subservient to every other species of knowledge. That of history in particular is not well conceived. No one has observed the gradation of impressions in literature, as they have those of problems in the sciences; in short, many things remain to be done in order to carry

education to its highest point, that is to say, the art of going backward with what one knows, in order to make others comprehend it. Pestalozzi makes use of geometry to teach children arithmetical calculation; this was also the method of the ancients. Geometry speaks more to the imagination than abstract mathematics. To become completely master of the human mind, it is right, as much as possible, to unite precision of instruction with vivacity of impression, for it is not even the depth of science, but obscurity in the manner of presenting it, which alone hinders children from attaining it: they comprehend every thing by degrees, and the essential point is to measure the steps by the progress of reason in infancy; this progress, slow but sure, will lead as far as possible, if we abstain from hastening its course.

It is very singular and pleasing to see at Pestalozzi's the countenances of children, whose round, unmeaning, and delicate features naturally assume an expression of reflection: they are attentive of themselves, and consider their studies as a man of ripened age would consider his business.

One remarkable circumstance is, that punishments and rewards are never necessary to excite them to industry; it is perhaps the first time that a school of a hundred and fifty children has been conducted without the stimulus of emulation and fear. How many evil sentiments are spared to the heart of man, when we drive far from him jealousy and humiliation, when he sees no rivals in his comrades, no judges in his masters! Rousseau wished to subject the child to the laws of destiny; Pestalozzi himself creates that destiny during the course of the child's education, and directs its decrees towards his happiness and his improvement. The child feels himself free, because he enjoys himself amidst the general order which surrounds him, the perfect equality of which is not deranged even by the talents of the children, whether more or less distinguished. Success is not the object of pursuit, but merely progress towards a certain point, which all endeavour to reach with the same sincerity. The scholars become masters when they know more than their comrades; the masters again become scholars when they perceive any imperfections in their

method, and begin their own education again, in order to become better judges of the difficulties attending the art of instruction.

It is pretty generally apprehended that Pestalozzi's method tends to stifle the imagination, and is unfavourable to originality of mind. An education for genius would indeed be a difficult matter; there is scarcely any thing but nature and government which can either inspire or excite it; but the first principles of knowledge, rendered perfectly clear and certain, cannot be an obstacle to genius; they give the mind a sort of firmness which afterwards renders the highest studies easy to it. We must view the school of Pestalozzi as hitherto confined to childhood—the education he gives should be considered as final only for the lower classes, but for that very reason it may diffuse a very salutary influence over the national character. The education of the rich ought to be divided into two different periods: in the first, the children are guided by their masters; in the second, they voluntarily instruct each other; and this sort of education, by choice, is that

which should be adopted in great universities. The instruction which is acquired at Pestalozzi's gives every man, of what class soever he may be, a foundation on which he may erect, as he chooses, either the cottage of the poor man or the palaces of kings.

We should be mistaken in France, if we thought there was nothing good to be taken from the school of Pestalozzi, except his rapid method of teaching calculation. Pestalozzi is not himself a mathematician; he is not well acquainted with the languages. He has only that sort of genius and instinct, which enables him to develop the understandings of children; he sees the direction which their thought takes in order to attain its object. That openness of character which sheds so noble a calm over the affections of the heart. Pestalozzi has judged necessary in the operations of the mind. He thinks there is a moral pleasure in completing our studies; and indeed we continually see that superficial knowledge inspires a sort of disdainful arrogance, which makes us reject as useless, dangerous, or ridiculous, all that we do not know. We

also see that this kind of superficial knowledge obliges us artfully to hide what we are ignorant of. Candour suffers from all those defects of education, which we are ashamed of in spite of ourselves. To know perfectly what we do know, gives a quietness to the mind, which resembles the satisfaction of conscience. The open honesty of Pestalozzi, that honesty carried into the sphere of the understanding, and which deals with ideas as scrupulously as with men, is the principal merit of his school. It is by that means he assembles round him, men devoted to the welfare of the children, in a manner perfectly disinterested. When in a public establishment none of the selfish calculations of the principals are answered, we must seek the spring which sets that establishment in motion, in their love of virtue: the enjoyments which it affords, are alone sufficient, without either riches or power.

We should not imitate the institution of Pestalozzi, merely by carrying his method of instruction to other places; it would be necessary also to establish with it the same perseverance in the masters, the same sim-

plicity in the scholars, the same regularity in their manner of life, and, above all, the religious sentiments which animate that school. The forms of worship are not followed there with more exactness than elsewhere; but every thing is transacted in the name of the Deity—in the name of that sentiment, noble, elevated, and pure, which is the habitual religion of the heart. Truth, goodness, confidence, affection, surround the children; it is in that atmosphere they live; and, for a time at least, they remain strangers to all the hateful passions, to all the proud prejudices of the world. An eloquent philosopher (Fichte) said, that he "expected the regeneration of the German "nation, from the institution of Pestaloz-"zi." It must be owned that a revolution founded on such means, would be neither violent nor rapid; for education, however excellent, is nothing in comparison with the influence of public events. Instruction penetrates the rock, drop by drop; but the torrent carries it off in a day. We must, above all, render homage to Pestalozzi, for the care he has taken to place his institution within the reach of persons without

fortune, by reducing his terms as much as possible. He is constantly occupied with the poorer classes, and wishes to secure for them the benefit of pure light and solid instruction. In this respect, the works of Pestalozzi form a very curious kind of reading. He has written tales, in which the situations in life of the common people are depicted with a degree of interest, truth, and morality, which is admirable. The sentiments which he expresses in his writings are as elementary (it may be said) as the principles of his method. We are astonished to find ourselves shedding tears over a word, a narration so simple, even so vulgar, that the warmth of our emotions alone gives it consequence. People belonging to the lower classes of society are of an intermediate state, between savages and men of civilized life; when they are virtuous, they have a kind of innocence and goodness, which cannot be met with in the great world. Society weighs heavily upon them, they struggle with nature, and their confidence in God is more animated and more constant than that of the rich. Incessantly threatened with misfortunes, having constantly recourse to

prayer, anxious all the day, and preserved every night, the poor feel themselves under the immediate hand of Him, who protects those who are abandoned by mankind; and their integrity, when they have any, is singularly scrupulous. I recollect, in a tale of Pestalozzi's, the restitution of some potatoes by a child who had stolen them: his dying grandmother orders him to carry them back to the owner of the garden, from whence he took them, and this scene affects us to the heart. This poor crime, if I may so call it, causing such remorse; the awfulness of death amidst all the miseries of life; old age and childhood drawn together by the voice of God, which speaks equally to each of them; all this is painful, very painful; for, in our poetic fictions, the pomp and splendour of destiny relieve us a little from the pity occasioned by its reverses; but we fancy we perceive in these popular tales, a feeble lamp enlightening a small cottage, and goodness of soul springing forth in the midst of all the afflictions by which it is tried.

As the art of drawing is to be considered as an useful art, it may be said that among

those which are merely pleasing, the only one introduced into the school of Pestalozzi is music, and we should praise him also for the choice of it. There is a whole order of sentiments, I might say a whole order of virtues, which belong to the knowledge, or at least to the taste for music; and it is great barbarity to deprive a numerous portion of the human race, of such impressions. The ancients pretended that nations had been civilized by music, and this allegory has a deep meaning; for we must always suppose that the bond of society was formed either by sympathy or interest, and certainly the first origin is more noble than the other.

Pestalozzi is not the only person in Germanic Switzerland, who occupies himself with zeal in cultivating the minds of the common people: in this respect I was much struck with the establishment of M. de Fellenberg. Many people came to it to acquire new light on the subject of agriculture, and it is said that in this respect they have had reason to be satisfied; but what principally deserves the esteem of the friends of humanity is the care which M.

de Fellenberg takes of the education of the lower classes; he causes village schoolmasters to be taught according to Pestalozzi's method, that they may in their turn teach children. The labourers, who cultivate his grounds, learn psalm tunes, and the praises of God will soon be heard in the country, sung by simple, but harmonious voices, which will celebrate at once both nature and its Author. In short, M. de Fallenberg endeavours by every possible means to form, between the inferior class and our own, a liberal tie—a tie which shall not be founded merely on the pecuniary interests of the rich and the poor.

We learn from the examples of England and of America, that free institutions are found sufficient to develop the faculties and understandings of the people; but it is a step farther to give them more than the instruction which is necessary to them. There is something revolting in the necessary, when it is measured out by those who possess the *superfluous*. It is not enough to be occupied in promoting the welfare of the lower classes with a view to *usefulness* only; they must also participate in the en-

joyments of the imagination and the heart. It is in this spirit that some enlightened philanthropists have taken up the subject of mendicity at Hamburgh. Neither despotism nor speculative economy have any place in their charitable institutions. It was their wish that the unfortunate objects of their care should themselves desire the labour which was expected from them, as much as the benefactions which were granted them. As the welfare of the poor was not with them a means, but an end, they have not ordered them employment, but have made them desire it. We constantly see in the different accounts given in of those charitable institutions, that the object of their founders was much more to render men better, than to make them more useful; and it is this high, philosophical point of view, that characterises the spirit of wisdom and liberty, which reigns in this ancient Hanseatic city.

There is much real beneficence in the world, and he who is not capable of serving his fellow creatures by the sacrifice of his time and of his inclinations, voluntarily contributes to their welfare with money: this

is still something, and no virtue is to be disdained. But, in most countries, the great mass of private alms is not wisely directed; and one of the most eminent services which the Baron de Voght and his excellent countrymen have rendered to the cause of humanity is, that of shewing, that without new sacrifices, without the intervention of the state, private beneficence is alone sufficient for the relief of the unfortunate. That which is effected by individuals, is particularly suited to Germany, where every thing taken separately is better than the whole together.

Charitable institutions ought indeed to prosper in the city of Hamburgh. There is so much morality amongst its inhabitants, that for a time they paid their taxes into a sort of trunk without any persons seeing what they brought; these taxes were to be proportioned to the fortune of each individual, and when the calculation was made, they were always found to be scrupulously paid. Might we not believe that we were relating a circumstance belonging to the golden age, if in that golden age there had been private riches and public

taxes? We cannot sufficiently admire how easy all things relating to instruction as well as to administration are rendered by honesty and integrity; we ought to grant them all the honours which dexterity usually obtains; for in the end they succeed better even in the affairs of this world.

THE FETE OF UNTERSEEN.

We must attribute to the German character a great part of the virtues of Germanic Switzerland. There is, nevertheless, more public spirit in Switzerland than in Germany, more of patriotism, more of energy, more of harmony in opinions and sentiments; but the smallness of the states, and the poverty of the country, do not in any degree excite genius: we find there much fewer learned or thinking men, than in the north of Germany, where even the relaxation of political ties gives freedom to all those noble reveries, those bold systems,

which are not subject to the nature of things. The Swiss are not a poetical nation, and we are with reason astonished that the beauties of their country should not have further inflamed their imagination. A religious and free people are at all times susceptible of enthusiasm, and the daily occupations of life cannot entirely subdue it. If this could have been doubted, we might still be convinced of it by the pastoral fête, which was last year celebrated in the midst of lakes, in the memory of the founder of Berne. This city merits more than ever the respect and interest of travellers: it appears since its last misfortunes to have resumed all its virtues with new ardour; and, while losing its treasures, has redoubled its beneficence towards the unfortunate. The charitable establishments in this place are perhaps the best attended to of any in Europe: the hospital is the finest, and indeed the only magnificent edifice in the city. On the gate is written this inscription—CHRISTO IN PAUPERIBUS. Nothing can be more admirable! Has not the Christian religion told us that it was for those who suffered, that

Christ descended on the earth? and who among us is not in some period of his life, either in respect to his happiness or his hopes, one of those unfortunate beings who needs relief in the name of God? Every thing throughout the city and canton of Berne bears marks of calm serious regularity, of a kind and paternal government. An air of probity is felt in every object which we perceive; we may believe ourselves in our own family whilst in the midst of two hundred thousand men, who, whether nobles, citizens, or peasants, are all equally devoted to their country.

In going to the fête it was necessary to embark on one of those lakes which, reflecting all the beauties of nature, seemed placed at the foot of the Alps only to multiply their enchanting forms. A stormy sky deprived us of a distinct view of the mountains; but half enveloped in clouds they appeared the more awfully sublime. The storm increased; and, though a feeling of terror seized my soul, I even loved the thunder-bolt of heaven which confounds the pride of man. We reposed ourselves for a moment in a kind of grotto, before we

ventured to cross that part of the lake of Thun which is surrounded by inaccessible rocks. It was in such a place that William Tell braved the abyss, and clung to the rocks in escaping from his tyrants. We now perceived in the distance that mountain which bears the name of the Virgin (Jungfrau), because no traveller has ever been able to attain its summit: it is less high than Mount Blanc, and yet it inspires more veneration because we know that it is inaccessible. We arrived at Unterseen; and the sound of the Aar, which falls in cascades near this little town, disposed the soul to pensive reflection. A great number of strangers were lodged in the rustic but neat abodes of the peasants: it was striking enough to see walking in the streets of Unterseen, young Parisians at once transported into the vallies of Switzerland. Here they heard only the torrents, they saw only the mountains, and endeavoured, in these solitary regions, to find means of tiring themselves sufficiently to return with renewed pleasure to the world.

Much has been said of an air played on the Alpine horn, — which made so

lively an impression on the Swiss, that when they heard it they quitted their regiments to return to their country. We may imagine what effect this air must produce when repeated by the echoes of the mountains; but it should be heard resounding from a distance; when near, the sensation which it produces is not agreeable. If sung by Italian voices, the imagination would be perfectly intoxicated with it; but perhaps this pleasure would give birth to ideas foreign to the simplicity of the country. We should wish for the arts, for poetry, for love, where we ought to content ourselves with the tranquillity of a country life. On the evening preceding the fête, fires were lighted on the mountains; thus it was that the deliverers of Switzerland formerly gave the signal of their holy conspiracy. These fires, placed on the heights, resembled the moon, when rising behind the mountains she displays herself at once brilliant and peaceful. It might almost have been thought, that new stars appeared to lend their aid to the most affecting sight which this world could offer. One of these flam-

ing signals seemed placed in the heavens; from whence it illumined the ruins of the castle of Unspunnen, formerly possessed by Berthold, the founder of Berne, in re-remembrance of whom this festival was given. Profound darkness encircled this bright object; and the mountains, which during the night resembled vast phantoms, seemed like the gigantic shades of the dead, whose memory we were then celebrating. On the day of the fête, the weather was mild, but cloudy; it seemed as if all nature must be in harmony with the tender emotions of every heart. The enclosure chosen for the games is surrounded by woody hills, behind which mountains rise above each other as far as the sight can reach. All the spectators, to the number of nearly six thousand, seated themselves in rows on the declivity; and the varied colours of their dress looked at a distance like flowers scattered over the meadows. No festival could ever have worn a more smiling appearance; but when we raised our eyes, the rocks suspended above us seemed, like destiny, to threaten weak mortals in the midst of their pleasures: if there is, how-

ever, a joy of the soul so pure as to disarm even fate, it was then experienced. When the crowd of spectators was assembled, the procession of the festival was heard approaching from a distance—a procession, which was, in fact, a solemn one; for it was devoted to the celebration of the past. It was accompanied with pleasing music: the magistrates appeared at the head of the peasants; the young girls were clothed in the ancient and picturesque costumes of their cantons; the halberts and the banners of each valley were carried in front, by old men with white hair, and dressed in habits exactly similar to those worn five centuries ago, at the time of the conspiracy of the Rutli. The soul was filled with emotion on seeing these banners, now so peaceful, with the aged for their guardians. Days long past were represented by these men, old in comparison with ourselves, but when considered in reference to the lapse of ages, how young!

There was an air of trust and reliance in all these feeble beings which was touching in the extreme, because it could only be inspired by the honesty of their souls. In

the midst of our rejoicing, our eyes filled with tears, just as they are wont to do, on those happy and yet melancholy days, when we celebrate the convalescence of those whom we love. At last the games began; and the men of the valley, and those of the mountains, displayed, in lifting enormous weights, or in wrestling with one another, a degree of agility and strength of body which was very remarkable. This strength formerly rendered nations more military; now, in our days, when tactics and artillery dispose the fate of armies, it is only to be seen in the games of husbandmen. The earth is better cultivated by men who are thus robust, but war cannot be made without the aid of discipline and of numbers; and even the emotions of the soul have less empire over human destiny, now that individuals have been sunk in communities, and that the human species seems, like inanimate nature, to be directed by mechanical laws. After the games were ended, and the good bailiff of the place had distributed the prizes to the victors, we dined under tents, and we sung verses in honour of the tranquil happiness of the Swiss. During

the repast, wooden cups were handed round, on which were carved William Tell, and the three founders of Helvetic liberty. With transport they drank to peace, to order, to independence; and the patriotism of happiness was expressed with a cordiality which penetrated every soul.

"The meadows are as flowery as ever, the "mountains as verdant: when all nature "smiles, can the heart of man alone be a "mere desert?"* No, most undoubtedly, it was not so; the soul expanded with confidence in the midst of this fine country, in the presence of these respectable men—all animated with the purest sentiments. A country, poor in itself, and narrow in extent, without luxury, without power, without lustre, is cherished by its inhabitants as a friend who conceals his virtues in the shade, and devotes them all to the happiness of those who love him. During the five centuries of prosperity which the Swiss have enjoyed, we may reckon wise generations

*These words were the burthen of a song, full of grace and talent, composed for this fête. The author is Madame Harmès, well known in Germany by her writings under the name of Madame de Berlepsch.

rather than great men; there is no room for exceptions where all are thus happy. The ancestors of this nation may still be said to reign there, ever respected, imitated, revived in their decendants. Their simplicity of manners, and attachment to ancient customs, the wisdom and uniformity of their lives, recal the past, and anticipate the future; a history which is always the same seems like a single moment, lasting through ages.

Life flows on, in these vallies, like the rivers which run through them; new waves indeed appear, but they follow the same course: may they never be interrupted! May the same festival be often celebrated at the foot of the same mountains! May the stranger admire them as wonders, while the Helvetian cherishes them as an asylum, where magistrates and fathers watch together over citizens and children.

PART II.

ON

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS.

CHAPTER I.

Why are the French unjust to German Literature?

I MIGHT answer this question in a very simple manner, by saying, that very few people in France are acquainted with the German language, and that its beauties, above all in poetry, cannot be translated into French. The Teutonic languages are

easily translated into each other; it is the same with the Latin languages: but these cannot give a just idea of German poetry. Music composed for one instrument is not executed with success on another of a different sort. Besides, German literature has scarcely existed in all its originality more than forty or fifty years; and the French, for the last twenty years, have been so absorbed in political events, that all their literary studies have been suspended.

It would however be treating the question very superficially, merely to say that the French are unjust to German literature, because they are ignorant of it: they have, it is true, strong prejudices against it; but these prejudices arise from a confused sentiment of the wide difference, both in the manner of seeing and feeling, which exists between the two nations.

In Germany there is no standard of taste on any one subject; all is independent, all is individual. They judge of a work by the impression it makes, and never by any rule, because no rule is generally admitted: every author is at liberty to form a new sphere for himself. In France, the greater

number of readers will neither be affected, nor even amused, at the expense of their literary conscience: their scrupulosity finds a refuge. A German author forms his own public; in France the public commands authors. As in France there are more people of cultivated minds than there are in Germany, the public exacts much more; while the German writers, eminently raised above their judges, govern, instead of receiving the law from them. From thence it happens that their writers are scarcely ever improved by criticism: the impatience of the readers, or that of the spectators, never obliges them to shorten their works, and they scarcely ever stop in proper time, because an author, being seldom weary of his own conceptions, can be informed only by others when they cease to be interesting. From self-love the French think and live in the opinions of others; and we perceive in the greater part of their works, that their principal end is not the subject they treat, but the effect they produce. The French writers are always in the midst of society, even when they are composing; for they never lose sight of the opinion, raillery,

and taste then in fashion, or in other words, the literary authority under which we live at such or such a time.

The first requisite in writing is a strong and lively manner of feeling. Persons who study in others what they ought to experience themselves, and what they are permitted to say, with respect to literature have really no existence. Doubtless, our writers of genius (and what nation possesses more of these than France?) have subjected themselves only to those ties which were not prejudicial to their originality: but we must compare the two countries, *en masse* and at the present time, to know from whence arises their difficulty of understanding each other.

In France they scarcely ever read a work but to furnish matter for conversation; in Germany, where people live almost alone, the work itself must supply the place of company; and what mental society can we form with a book, which should itself be only the echo of society! In the silence of retreat, nothing seems more melancholy than the spirit of the world. The solitary man needs an internal emotion, which shall

compensate for the want of exterior excitement.

Perspicuity is in France one of the first merits of a writer; for the first object of a reader is to give himself no trouble, but to catch, by running over a few pages in the morning, what will enable him to shine in conversation in the evening. The Germans, on the contrary, know that perspicuity can never have more than a relative merit: a book is clear according to the subject and according to the reader. Montesquieu cannot be so easily understood as Voltaire, and nevertheless he is as clear as the object of his meditations will permit. Without doubt clearness should accompany depth of thought; but those who confine themselves only to the graces of wit and the play on words, are much more sure of being understood. They have nothing to do with mystery, why then should they be obscure? The Germans, through an opposite defect, take pleasure in darkness; they often wrap in obscurity what was before clear, rather than follow the beaten road; they have such a disgust for common ideas, that when they find themselves obliged to recur to them, they sur-

round them with abstract metaphysics, which give them an air of novelty till they are found out. German writers are under no restraint with their readers; their works being received and commented upon as oracles, they may envelope them with as many clouds as they like; patience is never wanting to draw those clouds aside; but it is necessary, at length, to discover a divinity; for what the Germans can least support, is to see their expectations deceived: their efforts and their perseverance render some great conclusion needful. If no new or strong thoughts are discovered in a book, it is soon disdained; and if all is pardoned in behalf of superior talent, they scarcely know how to appreciate the various kinds of address displayed in endeavouring to supply the want of it.

The prose of the Germans is often too much neglected. They attach more importance to style in France than in Germany; it is a natural consequence of the interest excited by words, and the value they must acquire in a country where society is the first object. Every man with a little understanding is a judge of the justness or

suitableness of such and such a phrase, while it requires much attention and study to take in the whole compass and connexion of a book. Besides, pleasantry finds expressions much sooner than thoughts, and in all that depends on words only, we laugh before we reflect.

It must be agreed, nevertheless, that beauty of style is not merely an external advantage, for true sentiments almost always inspire the most noble and just expressions; and if we are allowed to be indulgent to the style of a philosophical writing, we ought not to be so to that of a literary composition: in the sphere of the fine arts, the form in which a subject is presented to us, is as essential to the mind as the subject itself.

The dramatic art offers a striking example of the distinct faculties of the two nations. All that relates to action, to intrigue, to the interest of events, is a thousand times better combined, a thousand times better conceived among the French; all that depends on the development of the impressions of the heart, on the secret storms of strong passion, is much better investigated among the Germans.

In order to attain the highest point of

perfection in either country, it would be necessary for the Frenchman to be religious, and the German more a man of the world. Piety opposes itself to levity of mind, which is the defect and the grace of the French nation; the knowledge of men and of society would give to the Germans that taste and facility in literature, which is at present wanting to them. The writers of the two countries are unjust to each other: the French, nevertheless, are more guilty in this respect, than the Germans; they judge without knowing the subject, and examine after they have decided: the Germans are more impartial. Extensive knowledge presents to us so many different ways of beholding the same object, that it imparts to the mind the spirit of toleration which springs from universality.

The French would, however, gain more by comprehending German genius, than the Germans would in subjecting themselves to the good taste of the French. In our days, whenever a little foreign leaven has been allowed to mix itself with French regularity, the French have themselves applauded it with delight. J. J. Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint

Pierre, Chateaubriand, &c. are, in some of their works, even unknown to themselves, of the German school; that is to say, they draw their talent only out of the internal sources of the soul. But if German writers were to be disciplined according to the prohibitory laws of French literature, they would not know how to steer amidst the quicksands that would be pointed out to them; they would regret the open sea, and their minds would be much more disturbed than enlightened. It does not follow that they ought to hazard all, and that they would do wrong in sometimes imposing limits on themselves; but it is of consequence to them to be placed according to their own modes of perception. In order to induce them to adopt certain necessary restrictions, we must recur to the principle of those restrictions without employing the authority of ridicule, which is always highly offensive to them.

Men of genius in all countries are formed to understand and esteem each other: but the vulgar class of writers and readers, whether German or French, bring to our recollection that fable of La Fontaine, where the stork cannot eat in the dish, nor the fox in

the bottle. The most complete contrast is perceived between minds developed in solitude, and those formed by society. Impressions from external objects, and the inward recollections of the soul, the knowledge of men and abstract ideas, action and theory, yield conclusions totally opposite to each other. The literature, the arts, the philosophy, the religion of these two nations attest this difference; and the eternal boundary of the Rhine separates two intellectual regions, which, no less than the two countries, are foreign to each other.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Judgment formed by the English on the Subject of German Literature.

GERMAN literature is much better known in England than in France. In England, the foreign languages are more studied, and the Germans are more naturally connected with the English, than with the French; nevertheless, prejudices exist even in England, both against the philosophy and the literature of Germany. It may be interesting to examine the cause of them.

The minds of the people of England are not formed by a taste for society, by the pleasure and interest excited by conversation. Business, the parliament, the administration, fill all heads, and political interests are the

principal objects of their meditations. The English wish to discover consequences immediately applicable to every subject, and from thence arises their dislike of a philosophy, which has for its object the beautiful rather than the useful.

The English, it is true, do not separate dignity from utility, and they are always ready, when it is necessary, to sacrifice the useful to the honourable: but they are not of those, who, as it is said in Hamlet, "with "the incorporal air do hold discourse"—a sort of conversation of which the Germans are very fond. The philosophy of the English is directed towards results beneficial to the cause of humanity: the Germans pursue truth for its own sake, without thinking on the advantages which men may derive from it. The nature of their different governments having offered them no great or splended opportunity of attaining glory, or of serving their country, they attach themselves to contemplation of every kind; and, to indulge it, seek in heaven that space which their limited destiny denies to them on earth. They take pleasure in the ideal, because there is nothing in the actual state of things which

speaks to their imagination. The English, with reason, pride themselves in all they possess, in all they are, and in all that they may become; they place their administration and love on their laws, their manners, and their forms of worship. These noble sentiments give to the soul more strength and energy: but thought, perhaps, takes a bolder flight, when it has neither limit nor determinate aim: and when incessantly connecting itself with the immense and the infinite, no interest brings it back to the affairs of this world.

Whenever an idea is consolidated; or, in other words, when it is changed into effect, nothing can be better than to examine attentively its consequences and conclusions, and then to circumscribe and fix them: but when it is merely in theory, it should be considered in itself alone. Neither practice nor utility are the objects of inquiry; and the pursuit of truth in philosophy, like imagination in poetry, should be free from all restraint.

The Germans are to the human mind what pioneers are to an army; they try new roads, they attempt unknown means: how

can we avoid being curious to know what they say on their return from their excursions into infinity? The English, who have so much originality of character, have nevertheless generally a dread of new systems. Justness of thought has been so beneficial to them in the affairs of life, that they like to discover it even in intellectual studies; and yet it is in these that boldness is inseparable from genius. Genius, provided it respect religion and morality, should be free to take any flight it chooses: it aggrandizes the empire of thought. Literature, in Germany, is so impressed with the reigning philosophy, that the repugnance felt for the one will influence the judgment we form of the other. The English have, however, for some time, translated the German poets with pleasure, and do not fail to perceive that analogy which ought to result from one common origin. There is more sensibility in the English poetry, and more imagination in that of Germany. Domestic affections holding great sway over the hearts of the English, their poetry is impressed with the delicacy and solidity of those affections: the Germans, more independent in all things, because

they are less free, paint sentiments as well as ideas through a cloud: it might be said that the universe vacillates before their eyes; and even, by the uncertainty of their sight, those objects are multiplied, which their talent renders useful to its own purposes.

The principle of terror, which is employed as one of the great means in German poetry, has less ascendancy over the imagination of the English in our days. They describe nature with enthusiasm, but it no longer acts as a formidable power which encloses phantoms and presages within its breast; and holds, in modern times, the place held by destiny among the ancients. Imagination in England is almost always inspired by sensibility; the imaginations of the Germans is sometimes rude and wild: the religion of England is more austere, that of Germany more vague: and the poetry of the two nations must necessarily bear the impression of their religious sentiments. In England, conformity to rule does not reign in the arts, as it does in France; nevertheless, public opinion holds a greater sway there than in Germany. National unity is the cause of it. The English

wish, in all things, to make principles and actions accord with each other. Theirs is a wise and well-regulated nation, which comprizes glory in wisdom, and liberty in order: the Germans, with whom these are only subjects of reverie, have examined ideas independent of their application, and have thus attained a higher elevation in theory.

It will appear strange, that the present men of literature in Germany, have shewn themselves more averse than the English to the introduction of philosophical reflections in poetry. It is true, that men of the highest genius in English literature, Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden in his Odes, &c. are poets, who do not give themselves up to a spirit of argumentation; but Pope, and many others, must be considered as didactic poets and moralists. The Germans have renewed their youth, the English are become mature.* The Germans profess a

* The English poets of our times, without entering into concert with the Germans, have adopted the same system. Didactic poetry has given place to the fictions of the middle ages, to the empurpled colours of the east; the reasoning faculties, and even eloquence itself, are not sufficient to an art essentially creative.

doctrine which tends to revive enthusiasm in the arts, as well as in philosophy, and they will merit applause if they succeed; for this age lays restraints also on them, and there was never a period in which there existed a greater inclination to despise all that is merely beautiful; none in which the most common of all questions, What is it good for? has been more frequently repeated.

CHAPTER III.

Of the principal Epochs of German Literature.

GERMAN literature has never had what we are accustomed to call a golden age; that is to say, a period in which the progress of science is encouraged by the protection of the sovereign power. Leo X. in Italy, Louis XIV. in France, and, in ancient times, Pericles and Augustus, have given their names to the age in which they lived. We may also consider the reign of Queen Anne as the most brilliant epoch of English literature; but this nation, which exists by its own powers, has never owed its great men to the influence of its kings. Germany was divided; in Austria no love of literature was

discovered, and in Frederic II. (who was all Prussia in himself alone,) no interest whatever for German writers. Literature, in Germany, has then never been concentrated to one point, and has never found support in the state. Perhaps it owes to this abandonment, as well as to the independence consequent on it, much of its originality and energy.

"We have seen poetry (says Schiller) "despised by Frederic, the favoured son of "his country, fly from the powerful throne "which refused to protect it; but it still "dared to call itself German; it felt proud "in being itself the creator of its own glory. "The songs of German bards, resounded on "the summits of the mountain, were pre-"cipitated as torrents into the vallies; the "poet, independent, acknowledged no law, "save the impressions of his own soul—no "sovereign, but his own genius."

It naturally followed from the want of encouragement given by government to men of literary talents in Germany, that their attempts were made privately and individually in different directions, and that they arrived late at the truly remarkable period of their literature.

The German language, for a thousand years, was at first cultivated by monks, then by knights, and afterwards by artisans, such as Hans-Sachs, Sebastian Brand, and others, down to the period of the Reformation; and latterly, by learned men, who have rendered it a language well adapted to all the subtleties of thought.

In examining the works of which German literature is composed, we find, according to the genius of the author, traces of these different modes of culture; as we see in mountains strata of the various minerals which the revolutions of the earth have deposited in them. The style changes its nature almost entirely, according to the writer; and it is necessary for foreigners to make a new study of every new book which they wish to understand.

The Germans, like the greater part of the nations of Europe in the times of chivalry, had also their troubadours and warriors, who sung of love and of battles. An epic poem has lately been discovered, called the "Nibelungs," which was composed in the thirteenth century; we see in it the heroism and fidelity which distinguished the men of

those times, when all was as true, strong, and determinate, as the primitive colours of nature. The German, in this poem, is more clear and simple than it is at present: general ideas were not yet introduced into it, and traits of character only are narrated. The German nation might then have been considered as the most warlike of all European nations, and its ancient traditions speak only of strong castles and beautiful mistresses, to whom they devoted their lives. When Maximilian endeavoured at a later period to revive chivalry, the human mind no longer possessed that tendency; and those religious disputes had already commenced, which direct thought towards metaphysics, and place the strength of the soul rather in opinions than in actions.

Luther essentially improved his language by making it subservient to theological discussion: his translation of the Psalms and the Bible is still a fine specimen of it. The poetical truth and conciseness which he gives to his style, are, in all respects, conformable to the genius of the German language, and even the sound of the words has an indescribable sort of energetic frankness,

on which we with confidence rely. The political and religious wars, which the Germans had the misfortune to wage with each other, withdrew the minds of men from literature; and when it was again resumed, it was under the auspices of the age of Louis XIV. at the period in which the desire of imitating the French pervaded almost all the courts and writers of Europe. The works of Hagedorn, of Gellert, of Weiss, &c. were only heavy French, nothing original, nothing conformable to the natural genius of the nation. Those authors endeavoured to attain French grace without being inspired with it, either by their habits or their modes of life. They subjected themselves to rule, without having either the elegance or taste which may render even that despotism agreeable. Another school soon succeeded that of the French, and it was in Germanic Switzerland that it was erected: this school was at first founded on an imitation of English writers. Bodmer, supported by the example of the great Haller, endeavoured to shew, that English literature agreed better with the German genius, than that of France. Gottsched, a learned

man, without taste or genius, contested this opinion, and great light sprung from the dispute between these two schools. Some men then began to strike out a new road for themselves. Klopstock held the highest place in the English school, as Wieland did in that of the French; but Klopstock opened a new career for his succession, while Wieland was at once the first and the last of the French school in the eighteenth century. The first, because no other could equal him in that kind of writing, and the last, because after him the German writers pursued a path widely different. As there still exist in all the Teutonic nations some sparks of that sacred fire, which is again smothered by the ashes of time, Klopstock, at first imitating the English, succeeded at last in awakening the imagination and character peculiar to the Germans; and almost at the same moment, Winckelmann in the arts, Lessing in criticism, and Goëthe in poetry, founded a true German school, if we may so call that, which admits of as many differences as there are individuals, or varieties of talent. I shall examine separately poetry, the dramatic art, novels,

and history; but every man of genius constituting (it may be said) a separate school in Germany, it appears to me necessary to begin by pointing out some of the principal traits which distinguish each writer individually, and by personally characterizing their most celebrated men of literature, before I set about analysing their works.

CHAPTER IV.

Wieland.

Of all the Germans who have written after the French manner, Wieland is the only one whose works have genius; and although he has almost always imitated the literature of foreign countries, we cannot avoid acknowledging the great services he has rendered to that of his own nation, by improving its language, and giving it a versification more flowing and harmonious. There was already in Germany a crowd of writers, who endeavoured to follow the traces of French literature, such as it was in the age of Louis XIV. Wieland is the first who introduced, with success, that of the eighteenth century. In his prose writings he bears

some resemblance to Voltaire, and in his poetry to Ariosto; but these resemblances, which are voluntary on his part, do not prevent him from being by nature completely German. Wieland is infinitely better informed than Voltaire: he has studied the ancients with more erudition than has been done by any poet in France. Neither the defects, nor the powers of Wieland, allow him to give to his writings any portion of the French lightness and grace.

In his philosophical novels, Agathon and Peregrinus Proteus, he begins very soon with analysis, discussion, and metaphysics. He considers it as a duty to mix with them passages which we commonly call flowery; but we are sensible that his natural disposition would lead him to fathom all the depths of the subject which he endeavours to treat. In the novels of Wieland seriousness and gaiety are both too decidedly expressed ever to blend with each other; for, in all things, though contrasts are striking, contrary extremes are wearisome.

In order to imitate Voltaire, it is necessary to possess a sarcastic and philoso-

phical irony, which renders us careless of every thing, except a poignant manner of expressing that irony. A German can never attain that brilliant freedom of pleasantry; he is too much attached to truth, he wishes to know and to explain what things are, and even when he adopts reprehensible opinions, a secret repentance slackens his pace in spite of himself. The Epicurean philosophy does not suit the German mind; they give to that philosophy a dogmatical character, while in reality it is seductive only when it presents itself under light and airy forms: as soon as you invest it with principles, it is equally displeasing to all.

The poetical works of Wieland have much more grace and originality than his prose writings. Oberon and the other poems, of which I shall speak separately, are charming, and full of imagination. Wieland has however been reproached for having treated the subject of love with too little severity, and he is naturally thus condemned by his own countrymen, who still respect women a little after the manner of their ancestors; but whatever may have been the wander-

ings of imagination which Wieland allowed himself, we cannot avoid acknowledging in him a large portion of true sensibility: he has often had a good or bad intention of jesting on the subject of love; but his disposition, naturally serious, prevents him from giving himself boldly up to it. He resembles that prophet, who found himself obliged to bless where he wished to curse; and he ends in tenderness what was begun in irony.

In our intercourse with Wieland we are charmed, precisely because his natural qualities are in opposition to his philosophy. This disagreement might be prejudicial to him as a writer, but it renders him more attractive in society; he is animated, enthusiastic, and, like all men of genius, still young even in his old age; yet he wishes to be sceptical, and is angry with those who woud employ his fine imagination in the establishment of his faith.

Naturally benevolent, he is nevertheless susceptible of ill-humour; sometimes, because he is not pleased with himself, and sometimes, because he is not pleased with others: he is not pleased with himself, because

he would willingly arrive at a degree of perfection in the manner of expressing his thoughts, of which neither words nor things are susceptible. He does not choose to satisfy himself with those indefinite terms, which perhaps agree better with the art of conversation than perfection itself: he is sometimes displeased with others, because his doctrine, which is a little relaxed, and his sentiments, which are highly exalted, are not always easily reconciled. He contains within himself a French poet and a German philosopher, who are alternately angry with each other; but this anger is still very easy to bear; and his discourse, filled with ideas and knowledge, might supply many men of talent with a foundation for conversation of various sorts.

The new writers, who have exoluded all foreign influence from German literature, have been often unjust to Wieland: it is he, whose works, even in a translation, have excited the interest of all Europe: it is he who has rendered the science of antiquity subservient to the charms of literature; it is he also, who, in verse, has given a musical and graceful flexibility to his fertile but

rough language; it is, nevertheless, true, that his country would not be benefited by possessing many imitators of his writings: national originality is a much better thing; and we ought to wish, even when we acknowledge Wieland to be a great master, that he may have no disciples.

CHAPTER V.

Klopstock.

In Germany, there have been many more remarkable men of the English, than of the French school. Amongst the writers formed by English literature, we must first reckon the admirable Haller, whose poetic genius served him so effectually, as a learned man, in inspiring him with the greatest enthusiasm for the beauties of nature, and the most extensive views of its various phenomena; Gessner, whose works are even more valued in France than in Germany; Gleim, Ramler, &c. and above them all Klopstock.

His genius was inflamed by reading Milton and Young; but it was with him that the true German school first began. He ex-

presses, in a very happy manner, in one of his odes, the emulation of the two Muses.

" I have seen—Oh! tell me, was it the " present, or did I contemplate the future?— " I have seen the Muse of Germany enter " the lists with the English Muse, and full of " ardour press forward to victory.

" Two goals, erected at the extremity of " the course, were scarcely distinguishable: " one was shaded by an oak, the other was " surrounded with palm-trees.*

" Accustomed to such combats, the Muse " of Albion proudly descended on the arena; " she recollected the ground which she " had already traversed in her sublime con- " test with the son of Meonides, with the " lyrist of the Capitol. She saw her rival " young and trembling, but her emotion " was glorious: the ardour of victory flushed " her countenance, and her golden hair " flowed on her shoulders.

" Scarcely retaining her respiration within " her agitated bosom, already she thought " she heard the trumpet; she devoured the

* The oak is the emblem of patriotic poetry, and the palm-tree that of the religious poetry, which comes from the east.

" arena with ardent eyes; she bent herself
" towards the goal.

" Proud of such a rival, still more proud
" of herself, the noble English Muse mea-
" sured the daughter of Tuisco with a glance.
" Yes, I remember, said she, in the forests
" of oak, near the ancient bards, together
" we sprung into birth.

" But I was told that thou wert no more:
" pardon, O Muse, if thou revivest to im-
" mortal life; pardon me that I knew it
" not till now. Nevertheless I shall know
" it better when we arrive at the goal.

" It is there—dost thou see it in the dis-
" tance? beyond that oak, seest thou those
" palms? canst thou discern the crown?
" thou art silent—Oh! that proud silence,
" that constrained countenance, that look of
" fire fixed on the earth—I know it.

" Nevertheless—think again before the
" dangerous signal, think—it—it not I who
" maintained the contest with the Muse of
" Thermophylæ, with her also of the seven
" hills?

" She said: the decisive moment is ar-
" rived, the herald approaches: O daughter

" of Albion, cried the Muse of Germany, I " love thee; in admiring, I love thee—but " the palm of immortality is dearer to me " even than thou art. Seize the crown if " thy genius demands it, but let me be al- " lowed to partake it with thee.

" How my heart beats—immortal gods— " even, if I were to arrive the first at the " sublime object of our course—Oh! then " thou wouldest follow close upon me—thy " breath would agitate my flowing hair.

" All at once the trumpet resounded; " they fly with the rapidity of an eagle; a " cloud of dust extends itself over the wide " career: I saw them near the oak, but the " cloud thickened, and they were soon lost " to my sight."

It is thus that the ode finishes, and there is a grace in not pointing out the victor.

I refer the examination of Klopstock's works, in a literary point of view, to the chapter on German poetry, and I now confine myself to the pointing them out as the actions of his life. The aim of all his works is either to awaken patriotism in his country, or to celebrate religion: if

poetry had its saints, Klopstock would certainly be reckoned one of the first of them.

The greater part of his odes may be considered as Christian psalms; Klopstock is the David of the New Testament: but that which honours his character above all, without speaking of his genius, is a religious hymn, under the form of an epic poem, called the Messiah, to which he devoted twenty years. The Christian world already possessed two poems, the Inferno of Dante, and Milton's Paradise Lost: one was full of images and phantoms, like the external religion of the Italians. Milton, who had lived in the midst of civil wars, above all excelled in the painting of his characters; and his Satan is a gigantic rebel, armed against the monarchy of heaven. Klopstock has conceived the Christian sentiment in all its purity; he consecrated his soul to the divine Saviour of men. The fathers of the church inspired Dante; the Bible inspired Milton: the greatest beauties of Klopstock's poem are derived from the New Testament; from the divine simplicity of the Gospel, he knew how to draw

a charming strain of poetry, which does not lesson its purity. In beginning this poem, it seems as if we were entering a great church, in the midst of which an organ is heard; and that tender emotion, that devout meditation, which inspires us in our Christian temples, also pervades the soul as we read the Messiah. Klopstock, in his youth, proposed to himself this poem as the object and end of his existence. It appears to me that men would acquit themselves worthily, with respect to this life, if a noble object, a grand idea of any sort, distinguished their passage through the world; and it is already an honourable proof of character to be able to direct towards one enterprize all the scattered rays of our faculties, the results of our labour! In whatever manner we judge of the beauties and defects of the Messiah, we ought frequently to read over some of its verses: the reading of the whole work may be wearisome, but every time that we return to it, we breathe a sort of perfume of the soul, which makes us feel an attraction to all things holy and celestial.

After long labours, after a great number

of years, Klopstock at length concluded his poem. Horace, Ovid, &c. have expressed, in various manners, the noble pride which seemed to ensure to them the immortal duration of their works:

"Exegi monumentum ære perennius:"*

and,

"Nomenque erit indelibile nostrum."†

A sentiment of a very different nature penetrated the soul of Klopstock when his Messiah was finished. He expresses it thus in his Ode to the Redeemer, which is at the end of his poem.

"I have hoped in thee, O heavenly Mediator! I have sung the canticle of the new covenant; the formidable race is run, and thou hast pardoned my tottering footsteps.

"Gratitude! eternal, ardent, exalted sentiment! O cause the harmony of my harp to resound. O, haste! my heart is overwhelmed with joy, and I shed tears of rapture.

"I ask no recompense; have I not al-

* "I have erected a monument more durable than brass."

† "The memory of my name shall be indelible."

" ready tasted the pleasure of angels since
" I have sung the glories of my God? The
" emotion it occasioned penetrated to the
" inmost recesses of my soul, and it vibrat-
" ed all that is most intimately connected
" with my being.

" Heaven and earth disappeared from my
" sight; but soon the storm subsided; the
" breath of my life resembled the pure and
" serene air of a vernal day.

" Ah! am I not recompensed? have I not
" seen the tears of Christians flow; and in
" another world, perhaps, they will again
" welcome me with those holy tears! I have
" also felt terrestrial joy; my heart (in
" vain would I conceal it from thee), my
" heart was animated by ambition for glory:
" in my youth it palpitated with this sen-
" timent; it still palpitates, but with a
" more chastened ardour.

" Has not thy apostle said to the faith-
" ful, 'If there be any virtue, if there be
" any praise, think on those things!'—It
" is this celestial flame which I have chosen
" for my guide; it appears before my steps,
" and displays a holier path to my ambi-
" tious sight.

"Led by this light, the delusion of ter-
"restrial pleasures has not deceived me.
"When I was in danger of wandering, the
"recollection of the holy hours in which
"my soul was initiated, the harmonious
"voices of angels, their harps, their concerts,
"recalled me to myself.

"I am at the goal; yes, I have reached
"it, and I tremble with happiness: thus
"(to speak in a human manner of celestial
"things), thus we shall be affected, when
"at a future day we shall find ourselves in
"the presence of Him who died and rose
"again for us.

"It is my Lord and my God, whose
"powerful hand has led me to this goal
"through the graves which surrounded me:
"he armed me with strength and courage
"against approaching death; and dangers,
"unknown, but terrific, were warded from
"the poet who was thus protected by a
"celestial shield.

"I have finished the song of the new
"covenant. I have traversed the formidable
"course. O heavenly Mediator, in thee
"have I put my trust."

This mixture of poetic enthusiasm and

religious confidence inspires both admiration and tenderness. Men of talents formerly addressed themselves to fabulous deities. Klopstock has consecrated his talents to God himself; and, by the happy union of the Christian religion with poetry, he shews the Germans how possible it is to attain a property in the fine arts, which may belong peculiarly to themselves, without being derived, as servile imitations, from the ancients.

Those who have known Klopstock, respect as much as they admire him. Religion, liberty, love, occupied all his thoughts. His religious profession was found in the performance of all his duties; he even gave up the cause of liberty when innocent blood would have defiled it; and fidelity consecrated all the attachments of his heart. Never had he recourse to his imagination to justify an error; it exalted his soul without leading it astray. It is said, that his conversation was full of wit and taste; that he loved the society of women, particularly of French women, and that he was a good judge of that sort of charm and grace which pedantry reproves. I

readily believe it; for there is always something of universality in genius, and perhaps it is connected by secret ties to grace, at least to that grace which is bestowed by nature.

How far distant is such a man from envy, selfishness, excess of vanity, which many writers have excused in themselves in the name of the talents they possessed! If they had possessed more, none of these defects would have agitated them. We are proud, irritable, astonished at our own perfections, when a little dexterity is mixed with the mediocrity of our character; but true genius inspires gratitude and modesty; for we feel from whom we received it, and we are also sensible of the limit, which he who bestowed has likewise assigned to it.

We find, in the second part of the Messiah, a very fine passage on the death of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who is pointed out to us in the Gospel as the image of contemplative virtue. Lazarus, who has received life a second time from Jesus Christ, bids his sister farewell with a mixture of grief and of confidence which is

deeply affecting. From the last moments of Mary, Klopstock has drawn a picture of the death-bed of the just. When in his turn he was also on his death-bed, he repeated his verses on Mary with an expiring voice; he recollected them through the shades of the sepulchre, and in feeble accents he pronounced them as exhorting himself to die well: thus, the sentiments expressed in youth were sufficiently pure to form the consolation of his closing life.

Ah! how noble a gift is genius, when it has never been profaned, when it has been employed only in revealing to mankind, under the attractive form of the fine arts, the generous sentiments and religious hopes which have before lain dormant in the human heart.

This same passage of the death of Mary was read with the burial service at Klopstock's funeral. The poet was old when he ceased to live, but the virtuous man was already in possession of the immortal palms which renew existence and flourish beyond the grave. All the inhabitants of Hamburgh rendered to the patriarch of

literature the honours which elsewhere are scarcely ever accorded, except to rank and power, and the manes of Klopstock received the reward which the excellence of his life had merited.

CHAPTER VI.

Lessing and Winckelmann.

PERHAPS the literature of Germany alone derived its source from criticism: in every other place criticism has followed the great productions of art; but in Germany it produced them. The epoch at which literature appears in its greatest splendour is the cause of this difference. Various nations had for many ages become illustrious in the art of writing: the Germans acquired it at a much later period, and thought they could do no better than follow the path already marked out; it was necessary then that criticism should expel imitation, in order to make room for originality. Lessing wrote in prose with unexampled

clearness and precision: depth of thought frequently embarrasses the style of the writers of the new school; Lessing, not less profound, had something severe in his character, which made him discover the most concise and poignant modes of expression. Lessing was always animated in his writings by an emotion hostile to the opinions he attacked, and a sarcastic humour gives strength to his ideas.

He occupied himself by turns with the theatre, with philosophy, antiquities, and theology, pursuing truth through all of them, like a huntsman, who feels more pleasure in the chase, than in the attainment of his object. His style has, in some respects, the lively and brilliant conciseness of the French; and it conduced to render the German language classical. The writers of the new school embrace a greater number of thoughts at the same time, but Lessing deserves to be more generally admired; he possesses a new and bold genius, which meets nevertheless the common comprehensions of mankind. His modes of perception are German, his manner of expression

European. Although a dialectician, at once lively and close in his arguments, enthusiasm for the beautiful filled his whole soul; he possessed ardour without glare, and a philosophical vehemence which was always active, and which by repeated strokes produced effects the most durable. Lessing analyzed the French theatre, which was then fashionable in his country; and asserted, that the English drama was more intimately connected with the genius of his countrymen. In the judgment he passes on Mérope, Zaïre, Semiramis, and Rodogune, he notices no particular improbability; he attacks the sincerity of the sentiments and characters, and finds fault with the personages of those fictions, as if they were real beings: his criticism is a treatise on the human heart, as much as on poetical literature. To appreciate with justice the observations made by Lessing on the dramatic system in general, we must examine, as I mean to do in the following chapters, the principal differences of French and German opinion on that subject. But, in the history of literature, it is remarkable that a German should

have had the courage to criticise a great French writer, and jest with wit on the very prince of jesters, Voltaire himself.

It was much for a nation, lying under the weight of an anathema which refused it both taste and grace, to become sensible that in every country there exists a national taste, a natural grace; and that literary fame may be acquired in various ways. The writings of Lessing gave a new impulse to his countrymen: they read Shakespear; they dared in Germany to call themselves German; and the rights of originality were established instead of the yoke of correction.

Lessing has composed theatrical pieces and philosophical works which deserve to be examined separately; we should always consider German authors under various points of view. As they are still more distinguished by the faculty of thought than by genius, they do not devote themselves exclusively to any particular species of composition; reflection attracts them successively to different modes of literature.

Amongst the writings of Lessing, one of the most remarkable is the Laocoon; it

characterizes the subjects which are suitable both to poetry and painting, with as much philosophy in the principles as sagacity in the examples: nevertheless Winckelmann was the man who in Germany brought about an entire revolution in the manner of considering the arts, and literature also as connected with the arts. I shall speak of him elsewhere under the relation of his influence on the arts; but his style certainly places him in the first rank of German writers.

This man, who at first knew antiquity only by books, was desirous of contemplating its noble remains; he felt himself attracted with ardour towards the south; we still frequently find in German imagination some traces of that love of the sun, that weariness of the north, which formerly drew so many northern nations into the countries of the south. A fine sky awakens sentiments similar to the love we bear to our country. When Winckelmann, after a long abode in Italy, returned to Germany, the sight of snow, of the pointed roofs which it covers, and of smoky houses, filled him with melancholy. He felt as if he could no longer enjoy the arts, when he no longer

breathed the air which gave them birth. What contemplative eloquence do we not discover in what he has written on the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoon! His style is calm and majestic as the object of his consideration. He gives to the art of writing the imposing dignity of ancient monuments, and his description produces the same sensation as the statue itself. No one before him had united such exact and profound observation with admiration so animated; it is thus, only, that we can comprehend the fine arts. The attention they excite must be awakened by love; and we must discover in the *chef-d'-œuvres* of genius, as we do in the features of a beloved object, a thousand charms, which are revealed to us by the sentiments they inspire.

Some poets before Winckelmann, had studied Greek tragedies, with the purpose of adapting them to our theatres. Learned men were known, whose authority was equal to that of books; but no one had hitherto (to use the expression) rendered himself a pagan in order to penetrate antiquity. Winckelmann possesses the defects and advantages of a Grecian amateur; and we

feel in his writings the adoration of beauty, such as it existed in a nation where it so often obtained the honours of apotheosis.

Imagination and learning equally lent their different lights to Winckelmann; before him it was thought that they mutually excluded each other. He has shewn us that to understand the ancients, one was as necessary as the other. We can give life to objects of art only by an intimate acquaintance with the country and with the epoch in which they existed. We are not interested by features which are indistinct. To animate recitals and fictions, where past ages are the theatre, learning must even assist the imagination, and render it, if possible, a spectator of what it is to paint, and a contemporary of what it relates.

Zadig guessed, by some confused traces, some words half torn, at circumstances which he deduced from the slightest indications. It is thus, that through antiquity we must take learning for our guide: the vestiges which we perceive are interrupted, effaced, difficult to lay hold of; but by making use at once of imagination and

study, we bring back time, and renew existence.

When we appeal to tribunals to decide on the truth of a fact, it is sometimes a slight circumstance which makes it clear. Imagination is in this respect like a judge; a single word, a custom, an allusion found in the works of the ancients, serves it as a light, by which it arrives at the knowledge of perfect truth.

Winckelmann knew how to apply to his inspection of the monuments of the arts that spirit of judgment which leads us to the knowledge of men: he studied the phisiognomy of the statue as he would have done that of a human being. He seized with great justness the slightest observations, from which he knew how to draw the most striking conclusions. A certain physiognomy, and emblematical attribute, a mode of drapery, may at once cast an unexpected light on the longest researches. The locks of Ceres are thrown back with a disorder that would be unsuitable to the character of Minerva; the loss of Proserpine has for ever troubled the mind of her mother. Minos, the son and disciple of Jupiter,

has in our medals the same features as his father; nevertheless the calm majesty of the one, and the severe expression of the other, distinguish the sovereign of the Gods from the judge of men. The Torso is a fragment of the statue of Hercules deified; of him, who received from Hebe the cup of immortality; while the Hercules Farnese yet possesses only the attributes of a mortal; each contour of the Torso, as energetic as this, but more rounded, still characterizes the strength of the hero; but of the hero who, placed in heaven, is thenceforth freed from the rude labours of the earth. All is symbolical in the arts, and nature shews herself under a thousand different appearances in those pictures, in that poetry, where immobility must indicate motion, where the inmost soul must be externally displayed, and where the existence of a moment must last to eternity.

Winckelmann has banished from the fine arts in Europe the mixture of ancient and modern taste in Germany, his influence has been still more displayed in literature than in the arts. We shall, in what fol-

lows, be led to examine, whether the scrupulous imitation of the ancients is compatible with natural originality; or rather, whether we ought to sacrifice that originality in order to confine ourselves to the choice of subjects, in which poetry, like painting, having no model in existence, can represent only statues. But this discussion is foreign to the merit of Winckelmann: in the fine arts, he has shewn us what constituted taste among the ancients; it was for the moderns, in this respect, to feel what it suited them to adopt or to reject. When a man of genius succeeds in displaying secrets of an antique or foreign nature, he renders service by the impulse which he traces: the emotion thus received becomes part of ourselves; and the greater the truth that accompanies it, the less servile is the imitation it inspires.

Winckelmann has developed the true principles, now admitted into the arts, of the nature of the ideal; of that perfect nature, of which the type is in our imagination, and does not exist elsewhere. The application of these principles to literature is singularly productive.

The poetic of all the arts is united under the same point of view in the writings of Winckelmann, and all have gained by it. Poetry has been better comprehended by the aid of sculpture, and sculpture by that of poetry; and we have been led by the arts of Greece to her philosophy. Those metaphysics, which have ideas for their object, originate with the Germans, as they did formerly with the Greeks, in the adoration of supreme beauty, which our souls alone can conceive and acknowledge. This supreme ideal beauty is a reminiscence of heaven, our original country; the sculptures of Phidias, the tragedies of Sophocles, and the doctrines of Plato—all agree to give us the same notion of it under different forms.

CHAPTER VII.

Goëthe.

THAT which was wanting to Klopstock was a creative imagination: he gave utterance to great thoughts and noble sentiments in beautiful verse; but he was not what might be called an artist. His inventions are weak; and the colours in which he invests them have scarcely even that plenitude of strength that we delight to meet with in poetry, and in all other arts which are expected to give to fiction the energy and originality of nature. Klopstock loses himself in the ideal: Goëthe never gives up the earth; even in attaining the most sublime conceptions, his mind possesses vigour not weakened by sensibility. Goëthe might

be mentioned, as the representative of all German literature; not that there are no writers superior to him in different kinds of composition, but that he unites in himself alone all that distinguishes German genius; and no one besides is so remarkable for a peculiar species of imagination which neither Italians, English, or French, have ever attained.

Goëthe having displayed his talents in composition of various kinds, the examination of his works will fill the greatest part of the following chapters; but a personal knowledge of the man who possesses such an influence over the literature of his country will, it appears to me, assist us the better to understand that literature.

Goëthe possesses superior talents for conversation; and whatever we may say, superior talents ought to enable a man to talk. We may, however, produce some examples of silent men of genius: timidity, misfortune, disdain, or ennui, are often the cause of it; but, in general, extent of ideas and warmth of soul naturally inspire the necessity of communicating our feelings to others; and those men who will not be

judged by what they say, may not deserve that we should interest ourselves in what they think. When Goëthe is induced to talk, he is admirable; his eloquence is enriched with thought; his pleasantry is, at the same time, full of grace and of philosophy; his imagination is impressed by external objects, as was that of the ancient artists; nevertheless his reason possesses but too much the maturity of our own times. Nothing disturbs the strength of his mind, and even the defects of his character, ill-humour, embarrassments, constraint, pass like clouds round the foot of that mountain, on the summit of which his genius is placed.

What is related of the conversation of Diderot may give some idea of that of Goëthe; but, if we may judge by the writings of Diderot, the distance between these two men must be infinite. Diderot is the slave of his genius; Goëthe ever holds the powers of his mind in subjection: Diderot is affected, from the constant endeavour to produce effect; but in Goëthe we perceive disdain of success, and that to a degree that is singularly pleasing, even when we

have most reason to find fault with his negligence. Diderot finds it necessary to supply by philanthropy his want of religious sentiments: Goëthe is inclined to be more bitter than sweet; but, above all, he is natural; and, in fact, without this quality, what is there in one man that should have power to interest another?

Goëthe possesses no longer that resistless ardour which inspired him in the composition of Werter; but the warmth of his imagination is still sufficient to animate every thing. It might be said, that he is himself unconnected with life, and that he describes it merely as a painter. He attaches more value, at present, to the pictures he presents to us, than to the emotions he experiences; time has rendered him a spectator. While he still bore a part in the active scenes of the passions, while he suffered, in his own person, from the perturbations of the heart, his writings produced a more lively impression.

As we do not always best appreciate our own talents, Goëthe maintains at present, that an author should be calm even when he is writing a passionate work;

and that an artist should equally be cool, in order the more powerfully to act on the imagination of his readers. Perhaps in early life, he would not have entertained this opinion; perhaps he was then enslaved by his genius, rather than its master; perhaps he then felt, that the sublime and heavenly sentiment being of transient duration in the heart of man, the poet is inferior to the inspiration which animates him, and cannot enter into judgment on it, without losing it at once.

At first we are astonished to find coldness, and even something like stiffness, in the author of Werter; but when we can prevail on him to be perfectly at his ease, the liveliness of his imagination makes the restraint which we first felt entirely disappear. He is a man of universal mind, and impartial because universal; for there is no indifference in his impartiality: his is a double existence a double degree of strength, a double light, which on all subjects enlightens at once both sides of the question. When it is necessary to think, nothing arrests his course; neither the age in which he lives, nor the habits he has formed, nor his ela-

tions with social life: his eagle glance falls decidedly on the object he observes. If his soul had developed itself by actions, his character would have been more strongly marked, more firm, more patriotic; but his mind would not have taken so wide a range over every different mode of perception; passions or interests would then have traced out to him a positive path.

Goëthe takes pleasure in his writings, as well as in his conversation, to break the thread which he himself has spun, to destroy the emotions he excites, to throw down the image he has forced us to admire. When, in his fictions, he inspires us with interest for any particular character, he soon shews the inconsistencies which are calculated to detach us from it. He disposes of the poetic world, like a conquerer of the real earth; and thinks himself strong enough to introduce, as nature sometimes does, the genius of destruction into his own works. If he were not an estimable character we should be afraid of that species of superiority which elevates itself above all things; which degrades and then again raises up: which affects us, and then laughs at our emotion;

which affirms and doubts by turns, and always with the same success.

I have said, that Goëthe possessed in himself alone, all the principal features of German genius; they are all indeed found in him to an eminent degree: a great depth of ideas, that grace which springs from imagination, a grace far more original than that which is formed by the spirit of society: in short, a sensibility sometimes bordering on the fantastic, but for that very reason the more calculated to interest readers, who seek in books something that may give variety to their monotonous existence, and in poetry, impressions which may supply the want of real events. If Goëthe were a Frenchman, he would be made to talk from morning till night: all the authors, who were contemporary with Diderot, went to derive ideas from his conversation, and afforded him, at the same time, an habitual enjoyment, from the admiration he inspired. The Germans know not how to make use of their talents in conversation, and so few people, even among the most distinguished have the habit of interrogating and answering, that society is scarcely at all

esteemed among them; but the influence acquired by Goëthe is not the less extraordinary. There are a great many people in Germany who would think genius discoverable even in the direction of a letter, if it were written by him. The admirers of Goëthe form a sort of fraternity, in which the rallying words serve to discover the adepts to each other. When foreigners also profess to admire him, they are rejected with disdain, if certain restrictions leave room to suppose that they have allowed themselves to examine works which nevertheless gain much by examination. No man can kindle such fanaticism without possessing great faculties, whether good or bad; for there is nothing but power, of whatever kind it may be, which men sufficiently dread to be excited by it to a degree of love so enthusiastic.

CHAPTER VIII.

Schiller.

SCHILLER was a man of uncommon genius and of perfect sincerity; these two qualities ought to be inseparable at least in a literary character. Thought can never be compared with action but when it awakens in us the image of truth. Falsehood is still more disgusting in writing han in conduct. Actions even of the most deceitful kind still remain actions, and we know what we have to depend on, either in judging or hating them; but writings are only a vain mass of idle words, when they do not proceed from sincere conviction.

There is not a nobler course than that of literature, when it is pursued as Schil-

ler pursued it. It is true, that in Germany there is so much seriousness and probity, that it is there alone we can be completely acquainted with the character and the duties of every vocation. Nevertheless Schiller was admirable among them all, both with respect to his virtues and his talents. His Muse was Conscience: she needs no invocation, for we hear her voice at all times, when we have once listened to it. He loved poetry, the dramatic art, history, and literature in general, for its own sake. If he had determined never to publish his works, he would nevertheless have taken the same pains in writing them; and no consideration, drawn either from success, from the prevailing fashion, from prejudice, or from any thing, in short, that proceeds from others, could ever have prevailed on him to alter his writings: for his writings were himself; they expressed his soul; and he did not conceive the possibility of altering a single expression, if the internal sentiment which inspired it had undergone no change. Schiller, doubtless, was not exempt from self-love; for if it be necessary, in order to animate us to glory, it is likewise so to ren-

der us capable of any active exertion whatever; but nothing differs so much from another in its consequences as vanity and the love of fame: the one seeks successes by fraud, the other endeavours to command it openly; this feels inward uneasiness, and lies cunningly in wait for public opinion; that trusts its own powers, and depends on natural causes alone for strength to subdue all opposition. In short, there is a sentiment even more pure than the love of glory, which is the love of truth: it is this love that renders literary men like the warlike preachers of a noble cause; and to them should henceforth be assigned the charge of keeping the sacred fire: for feeble women are no longer, as formerly, sufficient for its defence.

Innocence in genius, and candour in power, are both noble qualities. Our idea of goodness is sometimes debased by associating it with that of weakness; but when it is united to the highest degree of knowledge and of energy, we comprehend in what sense the Bible has told us, that "God "made man after his own image." Schiller did himself an injury, when he first en-

tered into the world, by the wanderings of his imagination; but with the maturity of age, he recovered that sublime purity which gives birth to noble thought; with degrading sentiments he held no intercourse. He lived, he spoke, he acted, as if the wicked did not exist; and when he described them in his works, it was with more exaggeration and less depth of observation than if he had really known them. The wicked presented themselves to his imagination as an obstacle in nature, as a physical scourge; and perhaps, in many respects, they have no intellectual being; the habit of vice has changed their souls into a perverted instinct.

Schiller was the best of friends, the best of fathers, the best of husbands; no quality was wanting to complete that gentle and peaceful character which was animated by the fire of genius alone: the love of liberty, respect for the female sex, enthusiastic admiration of the fine arts, inspired his mind; and in the analysis of his works it would be easy to point out to what particular virtue we owe the various productions of his masterly pen. It has been

said that genius is all-sufficient. I believe it, where knowledge and skill preside; but when we seek to paint the storms of human nature, or fathom it in its unsearchable depths, the powers even of imagination fail; we must possess a soul that has felt the agitation of the tempest, but into which the Divine Spirit has descended to restore its serenity.

I saw Schiller, for the first time, in the saloon of the Duke and Duchess of Weimar, in the presence of a society as enlightened as it was honourable. He read French very well, but he had never spoken it. I maintained, with some warmth, the superiority of our dramatic system over that of all others; he did not refuse to enter the lists with me, and without feeling any uneasiness from the difficulty and slowness with which he expressed himself in French, without dreading the opinion of his audience, which was all against him, his conviction of being right impelled him to speak. In order to refute him, I at first made use of French arms, vivacity and pleasantry; but in what Schiller said, I

soon discovered so many ideas through the impediment of his words; I was so struck with that simplicity of character, which led a man of genius to engage himself thus in a contest where speech was wanting to express his thoughts; I found him so modest and so indifferent as to what concerned his own success, so proud and so animated in the defence of what appeared to him to be truth, that I vowed to him, from that moment, a friendship replete with admiration.

Attacked, while yet young, by a hopeless disease, the sufferings of his last moments were softened by the attention of his children, and of a wife who deserved his affection by a thousand endearing qualities. Madame de Wollzogen, a friend worthy of comprehending his meaning, asked him, a few hours before his death, how he felt himself? "Still more and "more easy," was his reply; and, indeed, had he not reason to place his trust in that God, whose dominion on earth he had endeavoured to promote? Was he not approaching to the abode of the just?

Is he not at this moment in the society of those who resemble him? and has he not already rejoined the friends, who are also expecting our arrival in the seats of blessedness?

CHAPTER IX.

Of Style, and of Versification in the German Language.

In learning the prosody of a language, we enter more intimately into the spirit of the nation by which it is spoken, than by any other possible manner of study. Thence it follows that it is amusing to pronounce foreign words: we listen to ourselves as if another were speaking; but nothing is so delicate, nothing so difficult, to seize, as accent. We learn the most complicated airs of music a thousand times more readily than the pronunciation of a single syllable. A long succession of years, or the first impressions of childhood, can alone render us capable of imitating this pronunciation,

which comprehends whatever is most subtle and undefinable in the imagination, and in national character. The Germanic dialects have for their original, a mother tongue, of which they all partake. This common source renews and multiplies expressions in a mode always conformable to the genius of the people. The nations of Latin origin, enrich themselves, as we may say, only externally; they must have recourse to dead languages, to unproductive mines, for the extension of their empire. It is therefore natural, that innovations in words should be less pleasing to them, than to those nations which emit shoots from an ever-living stock. But the French writers require an animation and colouring of their style, by the boldest measures that a natural sentiment can suggest, while the Germans, on the contrary, gain by restricting themselves. Among them, reserve cannot destroy originality; they run no risk of losing it, but by the very excess of abundance. The air we breathe has much influence on the sounds we articulate: the diversity of soil and climate produces very different modes of pronouncing the same language. As

we approximate to the sea coast, we find the words become softer; the climate there is more temperate; perhaps also the habitual sight of this image of infinity inclines to thoughtfulness, and gives to pronunciation more of effeminacy and indolence: but when we ascend towards the mountains, the accent becomes stronger, and we might say that rhe inhabitants of these elevated regions wish to make themselves heard by the rest of the world, from the height of their natural *rostra*. We find in the Germanic dialects the traces of the different influences I have now had occasion to point out.

The German is in itself a language equally primitive, and of a construction almost equally skilful, with the Greek. Those who have made researches into the great families of nations, have thought they discovered the historical reasons for this resemblance. It is certainly true, that we remark in the German, a grammatical affinity with the Greek; it has all its difficulty, without its charm: for the multitude of consonants, of which the words are composed, render them rather noisy than sonorous. It might be

said, that the words themselves were more forcible than the things represented by them, and this frequently gives a sort of monotonous energy to the style. We should be careful, nevertheless, not to attempt softening the pronunciation of the German language too much; there always results from it a certain affected gracefulness, which is altogether disagreeable: it presents to our ears sounds essentially rude, in spite of the gentility with which we seek to invest them; and this sort of affectation is singularly displeasing.

J. J. Rousseau has said, that *the southern languages were the daughters of pleasure, the northern, of necessity.* The Italian and Spanish are modulated like an harmonious song; the French is eminently suited to conversation: their parliamentary debates, and the energy natural to the people, have given to the English something of expression, that supplies the want of prosody. The German is more philosophical by far than the Italian; more poetical, by reason of its boldness, than the French; more favourable to the rhythm of verses than the English; but it still retains a certain stiff-

ness that proceeds, possibly, from its being so sparingly made use of, either in social intercourse or in the public service.

Grammatical simplicity is one of the great advantages of modern languages. This simplicity, founded on logical principles common to all nations, renders them easy to be understood: to learn the Italian and English, a slight degree of study is sufficient; but the German is quite a science. The period, in the German language, encompasses the thought; and, like the talons of a bird, to grasp it, opens and closes on it again. A construction of phrases, nearly similar to that which existed among the ancients, has been introduced into it with greater facility than into any other European dialect; but inversions are rarely suitable to modern languages. The striking terminations of the Greek and Latin, clearly pointed out the words which ought to be joined together even when they were separated: the signs of the German declensions are so indistinct, that we have a good deal of difficulty to discover, under colours so uniform, the words which depend on each other.

When foreigners complain of the labour which is required to study the German language, they are told that it is very easy to write in that language with the simplicity of French grammar, while it is impossible in French to adopt the German period, and that therefore this should be considered as affording additional means of facility; but these means mislead many writers, who are induced to make too frequent use of them. The German, is perhaps the only language, in which verse is more easy to be understood than prose; the poetic phrase, being necessarily interrupted even by the measure of the verse, cannot be lengthened beyond it.

Without doubt, there are more shades, more connecting ties, between the thoughts in those periods, which in themselves form a whole, and assemble in the same point of view, all the various relations belonging to the same subject; but if we considered only the natural concatenation of different ideas, we should end by wishing to comprise them all in a single phrase. It is necessary for the human mind to divide, in order to comprehend, and we run a

risk of mistaking gleams of light for truth, when even the forms of a language are obscure.

The art of translation is carried farther in the German language than in any other European dialect. Voss has translated the Greek and Latin Authors with wonderful exactness; and W. Schlegel those of England, Italy, and Spain, with a truth of colouring which before him was unexampled. When the German is employed in a translation from the English, it loses nothing of its natural character, because both those languages are of Germanic origin; but whatever merit may be found in Voss's translation of Homer, it certainly makes, both of the Iliad and Odyssey, poems, the style of which is Greek, though the words are German. Our knowledge of antiquity gains by it; but the originality, peculiar to the idiom of every nation, is necessarily lost in proportion. It seems like a contradiction to accuse the German language of having at once too much flexibility and too much roughness: but what is reconcilable in character may also be reconcileable in languages; and we often find that the quality of roughness

does not exclude that of flexibility in the same person.

These defects are less frequently discovered in verse than in prose, and in original compositions than in translations. I think then we may with truth affirm, that there is at present no poetry more striking and more varied than that of the Germans.

Versification is a peculiar art, the investigation of which is inexhaustible: those words, which in the common relations of life serve only as signs of thought, reach our souls through the rhythm of harmonious sounds, and afford us a double enjoyment, which arises from the union of sensation and reflection; but, if all languages are equally proper to express what we think, they are not all equally so to impart what we feel; and the effects of poetry depend still more on the melody of words than on the ideas which they serve to express.

The German is the only modern language which has long and short syllables, like the Greek and Latin; all the other European dialects are either more or less ac-

cented; but verse cannot be measured, in the manner of the ancients, according to the length of the syllables: accent gives unity to phrases, as well as to words. It is connected with the signification of what is said: we lay a stress on that which is to determine the sense; and pronunciation, in thus marking particular words, refers them all to the principal idea. It is not thus with the musical duration of sound in language; this is much more favourable to poetry than accent, because it has no positive object, and affords only a high but indefinite pleasure, like all other enjoyments that tend to no determinate purpose. Among the ancients, syllables were scanned according to the nature of the vowels, and the connexion of their different sounds: harmony was the only criterion. In Germany, all the accessory words are short, and it is grammatical dignity alone, that is to say, the importance of the radical syllable, that determines its quantity; there is less of charm in this species of prosody, than in that of the ancients, because it depends more on abstract combinations than on involuntary sensation; it is nevertheless

a great advantage to any language, to have in its prosody that which may be substituted to rhyme.

Rhyme is a modern discovery; it is connected with all our fine arts, and we should deprive ourselves of great effects by renouncing the use of it. It is the image of hope and of memory. One sound makes us desire another, corresponding to it; and when the second is heard, it recals that which has just escaped us. This agreeable regularity must, nevertheless, be prejudicial to nature in the dramatic art, as well as to boldness in the epic. We can scarcely do without rhyme, in idioms, where the prosody is but little marked: and yet the restraints of construction may, in certain languages, be such, that a bold and contemplative poet may find it needful to make us sensible of the harmony of versification without the subjection of rhyme. Klopstock has banished Alexandrines from German poetry; he has substituted in their stead, hexameters, and iambic verses, without rhyme, according to the practice of the English, which give much greater liberty to the imagination. Alexandrine verses

suit but badly with German poetry; we may convince ourselves of this by the poems of the great Haller himself, whatever merit they may in other respects possess; a language, the pronunciation of which is so sonorous, deafens us by the repetition and uniformity of the hemisticks. Besides, this kind of versification calls for sentence and antitheses; and the German genius is too scrupulous and too sincere to adopt those antitheses, which never present ideas or images in their perfect truth, or in their most exact shades of distinction. The harmony of hexameters, and above all, of iambic verses, when without rhyme, is only natural harmony, inspired by sentiment: it is a marked and distinct declamation; while the Alexandrine verse imposes a certain species and turn of expression, from which it is difficult to get free. The composition of this kind of verse is even entirely independent of poetic genius; we may possess it, without having that genius; and on the contrary, it is possible to be a great poet, and yet feel incapable of conforming to the restrictions which this kind of verse imposes. Our first lyrical poets in France,

are perhaps, our finest prose writers; Bossuet, Pascal, Fenelon, Buffon, J. Jacques, &c. The despotism of Alexandrines often prevents us from putting into verse that which, notwithstanding, would be true poetry; while in foreign nations, versification being much more easy and natural, every poetical thought inspires verse, and, in general, prose is left to reason and argument. We might defy Racine himself to translate into French verse, Pindar, Petrarch, or Klopstock, without giving a character unnatural to them. Those poets have a kind of boldness which is seldom to be found, except in languages which are capable of uniting all the charms of versification with perfect originality; and this, in the French can only be done in prose.

One of the greatest advantages of the Germanic dialects in poetry is, the variety and beauty of their epithets. The German, in this respect also, may be compared to the Greek; in a single word, we perceive many images, as in the principal note of a concord, we have all the sounds of which it is composed, or as certain colours, which revive in us the perception of those

with which they are immediately connected. In French, we say only what we mean to say; and we do not see, wandering round our words, those clouds of countless forms, which surround the poetry of the northern languages, and awaken a crowd of recollections. To the liberty of forming one epithet out of two or three, is added that of animating the language by making nouns of verbs; the living, the willing, the feeling, are all expressions less abstract than life, will, and sentiment; and whatever changes thought into action gives more animation to the style. The facility of reversing the construction of a phrase, according to inclination, is also very favourable to poetry, and gives the power of exciting, by the varied means of versification, impressions analogous to those of painting and music. In short, the general spirit of the Teutonic dialect is independence. The first object of their writers is, to transmit what they feel; they would willingly say to poetry, what Eloisa said to her lover: "If there "be a word more true, more tender, and "more strongly expressive of what I feel, "that word I would choose." In France

the recollection of what is suitable and becoming in society, pursues genius even to its most secrete motions; and the dread of ridicule is like the sword of Damocles, which no banquet of the imagination can ever make us forget.

In the arts, we often speak of the merit of conquering a difficulty; it is said, nevertheless, with reason, that "either the difficulty is not felt, and then it is no difficulty, or it is felt, and is then not surmounted." The fetters imposed on the mind certainly give a spring to its powers of action; but there is often in true genius a sort of awkwardness, similar in some respects to the credulity of sincere and noble souls; and we should do wrong, in endeavouring to subject it to arbitrary restrictions, for it would free itself from them with much greater difficulty than talents of a second-rate order.

CHAPTER X.

Of Poetry.

THAT which is truly divine in the heart of man cannot be defined; if there be words for some of its features, there are none to express the whole together, particularly the mystery of true beauty in all its varieties. It is easy to say what poetry is not; but if we would comprehend what it is, we must call to our assistance the impressions excited by a fine country, harmonious music, the sight of a favoured object, and, above all, a religious sentiment which makes us feel within ourselves the presence of the Deity. Poetry is the natural language of all worship. The Bible is full of poetry; Homer is full of religion: not that there

are fictions in the Bible, or doctrines in Homer; but enthusiasm concentrates different sentiments in the same focus; enthusiasm is the incense offered by earth to heaven; it unites the one to the other.

The gift of revealing by speech the internal feelings of the heart is very rare; there is, however, a poetical spirit in all beings who are capable of strong and lively affections: expression is wanting to those who have not exerted themselves to find it. It may be said, that the poet only disengages the sentiment that was imprisoned in his soul. Poetic genius is an internal disposition, of the same nature with that which renders us capable of a generous sacrifice. The composition of a fine ode in an heroic trance. If genius were not versatile, it would as often inspire fine actions as affecting expressions; for they both equally spring from a consciousness of the beautiful which is felt within us.

A man of superior talent said, that "prose was factitious, and poetry natural;" and in fact, nations, a little civilized, begin always with poetry: and whenever a strong

passion agitates the soul, the most common of men make use, unknown to themselves, of images and metaphors; they call exterior nature to their assistance, to express what is inexpressible within themselves. Common people are much nearer being poets, than men accustomed to good society; the rules of politeness, and delicate raillery, are fit only to impose limits, they cannot impart inspiration. In this world, there is an endless contest between poetry and prose; but pleasantry must always place itself on the side of prose; for, to jest is to descend. The spirit of society is however very favourable to that gay and graceful poetry of which Ariosto, La Fontaine, and Voltaire are the most brilliant models. Dramatic poetry is admirable in our first writers; descriptive, and, above all, didactic poetry have been carried by the French to a very high degree of perfection; but it does not appear, that they have hitherto been called on to distinguish themselves in lyric or epic poetry, such as it was formerly conceived by the ancients, and at present by foreigners.

Lyric poetry is expressed in the name of

the author himself; he no longer assumes a character, but experiences in his own person, the various emotions he describes. J. B. Rousseau, in his devotional odes, and Racine, in his Athalie, have shown themselves lyric poets. They were imbued with a love of psalmody, and penetrated with a lively faith. Nevertheless, the difficulties of the language and of French versification, are frequently obstacles to this delirium of enthusiasm. We may quote admirable strophes in some of our odes, but have we any complete ode in which the Muse has not abandoned the poet? Fine verses are not always poetry; inspiration in the arts is an inexhaustible source, which vivifies the whole, from the first word to the last. Love, country, faith, all are divinities in an ode. It is the apotheosis of sentiment. In order to conceive the true grandeur of lyric poetry, we must wander in thought into the ethereal regions, forget the tumult of earth in listening to celestial harmony, and consider the whole universe as a symbol of the emotions of the soul.

The enigma of human destiny is nothing to the generality of men; the poet has it

always present to his imagination. The idea of death, which depresses vulgar minds, gives to genius additional boldness; and the mixture of the beauties of nature with the terrors of dissolution, excites an indescribable delirium of happiness and terror, without which we can neither comprehend nor describe the *spectacle* of this world. Lyric poetry relates nothing, is not confined to the succession of time, or the limits of space; it spreads its wings over countries, and over ages; it gives duration to the sublime moment in which man rises superior to the pains and pleasures of life. Amidst the wonders of the world, he feels himself a being at once creator and created; who must die, and yet cannot cease to be; and whose heart, trembling, yet at the same time powerful, takes pride in itself, yet prostrates itself before God.

The Germans, at once uniting the powers of imagination and reflection (qualities which very rarely meet), are more capable of lyric poetry than most other nations. The moderns cannot give up a certain profundity of ideas, to which they have been habituated by a religion completely spiritual;

and yet, nevertheless, if this profundity were not invented with images, it would not be poetry: nature then must be aggrandized in the eyes of men, before they can employ it as the emblem of their thoughts. Groves, flowers, and rivers, were sufficient for the poets of paganism; but the boundless ocean, the starry firmament, can scarcely express the eternal and the infinite, which pervade and fill the soul of a Christian.

The Germans possess no epic poem, any more than ourselves: this admirable species of composition does not appear to be granted to the moderns, and perhaps the Iliad alone completely answers our ideas of it. To form an epic poem, a particular combination of circumstances, such as occurred only among the Greeks, is requisite, together with the imagination displayed in heroic times, and the perfection of language peculiar to more civilized periods. In the middle ages, imagination was strong, but the language imperfect; in our days, language is pure, but the imagination defective. The Germans have much boldness in their ideas and style, but little invention, in

the plan of their subject: their essays in the epic almost always resemble the character of lyric poetry; those of the French bear a stronger affinity to the dramatic, and we discover in them more of interest than of grandeur. When the object is to please on the stage, the art of circumscribing oneself within a given space, of guessing at the taste of spectators, and bending to it with address, forms a part of the success; but in the composition of an epic poem, nothing must depend on external and transient circumstances. It exacts absolute beauties, beauties which may strike the solitary reader, even when his sentiments are most natural, and his imagination most emboldened. He who hazards too much in an epic poem, would possibly incur severe censure from the good taste of the French; but he who hazards nothing would not be the less condemned.

It must be acknowledged, that in improving the taste and language of his country, Boileau has given to French genius a disposition very unfavourable to poetic composition. He has spoken only of that which ought to be avoided, he has dwelt only

on precepts of reason and wisdom, which have introduced into literature, a sort of pedantry, very prejudicial to the sublime energy of the arts. In French, we have master pieces of versification ; but how can we call mere versification poetry! To render into verse what should have remained in prose, to express, in lines of ten syllables, like Pope, the minutest details of a game at cards : or, as in some poems which have lately appeared among us, draughts, chess, and chemistry, is a trick of legerdemain in words : it is composing with words, what we call a poem, in the same manner as, with notes of music, we compose a sonata.

A great knowledge of the poetic art is however necessary to enable an author, thus admirably, to describe objects which yield so little scope to the imagination; and we have reason to admire some detached pieces in those galleries of pictures: but the intervals by which they are separated are necessarily prosaic, like that which passes in the mind of the writer. He says to himself, " I will make verses on this subject, " then on that, and afterwards on this also:" and, without perceiving it, he entrusts us

with a knowledge of the manner in which he pursues his work. The true poet, it may be said, conceives his whole poem at once in his soul, and, were it not for the difficulties of language, would pour forth his extemporaneous effusions, the sacred hymns of genius, as the sibyls and prophets did in ancient times. He is agitated by his conceptions as by a real event of his life; a new world is opened to him; the sublime image of every various situation and character, of every beauty in nature, strikes his eye; and his heart pants for that celestial happiness, the idea of which, like lightening, gives a momentary splendour to the obscurity of his fate. Poetry is a momentary possession of all our soul desires; genius makes the boundaries of existence disappear, and transforms into brilliant images the uncertain hope of mortals.

It would be easier to describe the symptoms of genius, than to give precepts for the attainment of it. Genius, like love, is felt by the strong emotions with which it penetrates him who his endowed with it; but if we dared to advise, where nature should be the only guide, it is not merely

iterary counsel that we should give. We hould speak of poets, as to citizens and heroes, we should say to them, Be virtuous, be faithful, be free; respect what is dear to you, seek immortality in love, and the Deity in nature; in short, sanctify your soul as a temple, and the angel of noble thoughts will not disdain to appear in it.

CHAPTER XI.

Of Classic and Romantic Poetry.

THE word *romantic* has been lately introduced in Germany, to designate that kind of poetry which is derived from the songs of the Troubadours; that which owes its birth to the union of chivalry and Christianity. If we do not admit that the empire of literature has been divided between paganism and Christianity, the north and the south, antiquity and the middle ages, chivalry and the institutions of Greece and Rome, we shall never succeed in forming a philosophical judgment of ancient and of modern taste.

We sometimes consider the word *classic* as synonimous to perfection. I use it at

present in a different acceptation; considering classic poetry as that of the ancients, and romantic, or *romanesque* poetry, as that which is generally connected with the traditions of chivalry. This divison is equally suitable to the two æras of the world; that which preceded, and that which followed the establishment of Christianity.

In various German works, ancient poetry has also been compared to sculpture, and modern to painting; in short, the progress of the human mind has been characterized in every different manner, passing from material religion to those which are spiritual—from nature to the Deity.

The French nation, certainly the most cultivated of all that are derived from Latin origin, inclines towards classic poetry imitated from the Greeks and Romans. The English, the most illustrious of the Germanic nations, is more attached to that which owes its birth to chivalry and romance; and it prides itself on the admirable compositions of this sort which it possesses. I will not, in this place, examine which of these two kinds of poetry deserves the preference; it is sufficient to shew, that the

diversities of taste on this subject do not merely spring from accidental causes, but are derived also from the primitive sources of imagination and thought.

There is a kind of simplicity both in the epic poems and tragedies of the ancients; because at that time men were completely the children of nature, and believed themselves controlled by fate, as absolutely as nature herself is controlled by necessity. Man, reflecting but little, bore the impressions of his soul on his countenance; even conscience, was represented by external objects, and the torch of the Furies shook the horrors of remorse over the head of the guilty. In ancient times, men attended to events alone, but among the moderns, character is of greater importance; and that uneasy reflection, which, like the vulture of Prometheus, often internally devours us, would have been folly, amidst circumstances and relations so clear and decided, as they existed in the civil and social state of the ancients.

When the art of sculpture began in Greece, single statues alone were formed; groupes were composed at a later period.

It might be said with equal truth, that there were no groupes in any art: objects were represented in succession, as in bas-reliefs, without combination, without complication of any kind. Man personified nature; nymphs inhabited the waters, hamadryads the forests: but nature, in turn, possessed herself of man; and it might be said, he resembled the torrent, the thunderbolt, the volcano, so wholly did he act from involuntary impulse, and so insufficient was reflection in any respect, to alter the motives of the consequences of his actions. The ancients, if we may be allowed the expression, possessed a corporeal soul, and its emotions were all strong, decided, and consistent: it is not the same with the human heart as it is developed by Christianity; from the repentance it so strongly enjoins, the moderns have derived a constant habit of self-reflection.

But in order to manifest this kind of internal existence, a great variety of outward facts and circumstances must display, under every form, the innumerable shades and gradations of that which is passing in the soul. If in our days the fine arts were

confined to the simplicity of the ancients, we should never attain that primitive strength which distinguishes them, and we should lose those intimate and multiplied emotions of which our souls are susceptible. Simplicity in the arts, would, among the moderns, easily degenerate into coldness and abstraction, while that of the ancients was full of life and animation. Honour and love, valour and pity, were the sentiments which distinguished the Christianity of chivalrous ages; and those dispositions of the soul could only be displayed by dangers, exploits, love, misfortunes—that romantic interest, in short, by which pictures are incessantly varied. The sources from which art derives its effect are then very different in classic poetry and in that of romance; in one it is fate which reigns, in the other it is Providence. Fate counts the sentiments of men as nothing; but Providence judges of actions according to those sentiments. Poetry must necessarily create a world of a very different nature, when its object is to paint the work of destiny, which is both blind and deaf, maintaining an endless contest with mankind; and when it attempts

to describe that intelligent order, over which the Supreme Being continually presides; that Being, whom our hearts supplicate, and who mercifully answers their petitions!

The poetry of the pagan world was necessarily as simple and well defined as the objects of nature; while that of Christianity requires the various colours of the rainbow to preserve it from being lost in the clouds. The poetry of the ancients is more pure as an art; that of the moderns more readily calls forth our tears. But our present object is not so much to decide between classic and romantic poetry, properly so called, as between the imitation of the one and the inspiration of the other. The literature of the ancients is, among the moderns, a transplanted literature; that of chivalry and romance is indigenous, and flourishes under the influence of our religion and our institutions. Writers, who are imitators of the ancients, have subjected themselves to the rules of strict taste alone; for, not being able to consult either their own nature or their own recollections, it is necessary for them to conform to those laws by which the chefs-d'-œuvre of the ancients

may be adapted to our taste; though the circumstances both political and religious, which gave birth to those chefs-d'-œuvre, are all entirely changed. But the poetry written in imitation of the ancients, however perfect in its kind, is seldom popular, because, in our days, it has no connexion whatever with our national feelings.

The French, being the most classical of all modern poetry, is of all others least calculated to become familiar among the lower orders of the people. The stanzas of Tasso are sung by the gondoliers of Venice: the Spaniards and Portuguese, of all ranks, know by heart the verses of Calderon and Camoëns. Shakspear is as much admired by the populace in England as by those of a higher class. The poems of Goëthe and Bürger are set to music, and repeated from the banks of the Rhine to the shores of the Baltic. Our French poets are admired wherever there are cultivated minds, either in our own nation, or in the rest of Europe; but they are quite unknown to the common people, and even to the class of citizens in our towns, because the arts, in France, are not, as elsewhere, natives of the

very country in which their beauties are displayed.

Some French critics have asserted, that German literature is still in its infancy; this opinion is entirely false: men who are best skilled in the knowledge of languages, and the works of the ancients, are certainly not ignorant of the defects and advantages attached to the species of literature which they either adopt or reject; but their character, their habits, and their modes of reasoning, have led them to prefer that which is founded on the recollection of chivalry, on the wonders of the middle ages, to that which has for its basis the mythology of the Greeks. The literature of romance is alone capable of farther improvement, because, being rooted in our own soil, that alone can continue to grow and acquire fresh life: it expresses our religion; it recals our history; its origin is ancient, although not of classical antiquity. Classic poetry, before it comes home to us, must pass through our recollections of paganism: that of the Germans is the Christian æra of the fine arts; it employs our personal impressions to excite strong and vivid emo-

tions; the genius by which it is inspired addresses itself immediately to our hearts, and seems to call forth the spirit of our own lives, of all phantoms at once the most powerful and the most terrible.

CHAPTER XII.

Of German Poems.

FROM the various reflections contained in the preceding chapter, I think we must conclude that there is scarcely any classic poetry in Germany—whether we consider it as imitated from the ancients, or whether by the word classic we merely understand the highest degree of perfection. The fruitful imagination of the Germans leads them to produce, rather than to correct; and therefore it would be very difficult to quote in their literature, any writings generally acknowledged as models. Their language is not fixed; taste changes with every new production of men of genius; all is progressive, all goes on, and the stationary point of

perfection is not yet attained; but is this an evil? In all those nations which have flattered themselves with having reached it, the symptoms of decay have been almost immediately perceived, and imitators have succeeded classical writers, as if for the purpose of disgusting us with their writings.

In Germany there are as many poets as in Italy; the multitude of attempts, of whatever kind they may be, indicates the natural disposition of a nation. When a love of the arts is universal in it, the mind naturally takes a direction towards poetry, as elsewhere towards politics, or mercantile interests. Among the Greeks there was a crowd of poets; and nothing is more favourable to genius than the being surrounded with a great number of men, who follow the same career. Artists are indulgent when judging of faults, because the difficulties of an art are known to them; but they exact much before they bestow approbation; great beauties and new beauties must be produced, before any work of art can in their eyes equal the chefs-d'-œuvre which continually occupy their thoughts. The Germans write extempore, if we may so express it, and this great facility is the

true sign of genius for the fine arts; for, like the flowers of the south, they ought to bloom without culture: labour improves them; but imagination is abundant, when a liberal nature has imparted it to man. It is impossible to mention all the German poets who would deserve a separate eulogy; I will confine myself merely to the consideration, and that in a general manner, of the three schools which I have already distinguished, when I pointed out the historical progress of German literature.

Wieland in his tales has imitated Voltaire, and often Lucian also, who, in a philosophical point of view, might be called the Voltaire of antiquity; sometimes too, he has imitated Ariosto, and unfortunately also Crébillon. He has rendered several tales of chivalry into verse; namely, Gandalin, Giron le Courtois, Oberon, &c. in which there is more sensibility than in Ariosto, but always less of grace and gaiety. The German does not glide over all subjects with the ease and lightness of the Italian; and the pleasantries suitable to a language so overcharged with consonants, are those connected with the art of strongly characterizing a subject, rather

than of indicating it imperfectly. Idris and the New Amadis are fairy tales, in which at every page the virtue of women is the subject of those everlasting pleasantries, which cease to be immoral, because they have become tiresome. Wieland's tales of chivalry appear to me much superior to his poems imitated from the Greek, Musarion, Endymion, Ganymede, the Judgment of Paris, &c. Tales of chivalry are national in Germany. The natural genius of the language, and of its poets, is well adapted to the art of painting the exploits and the loves of those knights and heroines, whose sentiments were at the same time so strong and so simple, so benevolent and so determined; but in attempting to unite modern grace with Grecian subjects, Wieland has necessarily rendered them affected. Those who endeavour to modify ancient taste by that of the moderns, or modern taste by that of the ancients, are almost always so. To be secure from this danger, we must treat each of these subjects entirely according to its own nature.

Oberon passes in Germany almost for an epic poem. It is founded on a tale of French chivalry, Huon de Bourdeaux, of which M.

de Tressan has given us an abstract; and Oberon the Genius, with Titania the Fairy, just such as Shakspear has described them in the play of the "Midsummer Night's "Dream," constitute the mythology of the poem. The subject is given by our old romantic writers; but we cannot too much admire the poetry with which Wieland has enriched it. Pleasantry drawn from the marvellous is there handled with much grace and originality. Huon is sent into Palestine, in consequence of various adventures, to ask the daughter of the Sultan in marriage; and when the gravest personages, who oppose that marriage, are all set dancing, at the sound of the singular horn which he possesses, we are never tired by the skilful repetition of the comic effect it produces; and the better the poet has described the pedantic gravity of the imans and viziers at the court of the Sultan, the more his readers are amused by their involuntary dance. When Oberon carries the two lovers through the air in a winged car, the terror of that prodigy is dissipated by the security with which love inspires them. "In vain," says the poet, "earth disap-"pears to their sight; in vain night covers

" the atmosphere with her dark wings; a " heavenly light beams in their tender glances; " their souls mutually reflect each other; " night is no longer night; elysium surrounds " them; the sun enlightens the recesses of " their hearts, and love every moment shews " them objects, always new, and always de- " lightful." Sensibility is not in general much connected with the marvellous: there is something so serious in the affections of the soul, that we like not to see them drawn forth with the sports of the imagination; but Wieland has the art of uniting fantastic fictions with true sentiments, in a manner peculiar to himself.

The baptism of the Sultan's daughter, who becomes a Christian in order to marry Huon, is also a most beautiful passage: to change one's religion for the sake of love is a little profane; but Christianity is so truly the religion of the heart, that to love with devotion and purity is already to be a convert. Oberon has made the young people promise not to give themselves up to each other, till their arrival in Rome; they are together in the same ship, and, separated from the world, love induces them to

violate their vow. The tempest is then let loose, the winds blow, the billows roar, and the sails are torn; the masts are destroyed by the thunderbolt; the passengers bewail themselves, the sailors cry for help: at length the vessel splits, the waves threaten to swallow them up, and the presence of death can scarcely take from the young couple their sense of earthly happiness. They are precipitated in the ocean: an invisible power preserves and lands them on a desert island, where they find a hermit, whom religion and misfortunes have led to that retreat.

Amanda, espoused to Huon, after many difficulties, brings a son into the world; and nothing can be more delightful than this picture of maternal tenderness in the desert: the new being who comes to animate their solitude, the uncertain look, the wandering glance of infancy, which the passionate tenderness of the mother endeavours to fix on herself, all is full of sentiment and of truth. The trials to which the married pair are subjected by Oberon and Titania, are continued; but in the conclusion their constancy is rewarded. Although this poem is

diffuse it is impossible not to consider it as a charming work, and if it were well translated into French verse, it would certainly be thought so.

There have been poets, both before and since Wieland, who have attempted to write in the French and Italian manner; but what they have done scarcely deserves to be mentioned: and if German literature had not assumed a peculiar character, it certainly would not form an epoch in the history of the fine arts. That of poetry must in Germany be fixed at the time when the Messiah of Klopstock made its appearance.

The hero of that poem, according to our mortal language, inspires admiration and pity in the same degree, without either of these sentiments being weakened by the other. A generous poet* said in speaking of Louis XVI.

"Jamais tant de respect n'admit tant de pitié."

This verse, so affecting and so delicate, might serve to express the tender emotions we experience in reading Klopstock's Mes-

* M. de Sabran.

siah. The subject of it is, without doubt, vastly superior to all the inventions of genius; a great deal however is requisite to display with so much sensibility the human in the divine, and with so much force the divine in the mortal, nature. Much talent is also required to excite interest and anxiety in the recital of an event, previously determined by an all-powerful Will. Klopstock has, with great art, at once united all that terror and that hope which the fatality of the ancients and the providence of Christians can jointly inspire.

I have already spoken of the character of Abbadona, the repentant demon, who seeks to do good to man: a devouring remorse attaches itself to his immortal nature; his regret has heaven itself for its object—that heaven which he has known, those celestial spheres which were his habitation. What a situation is this return towards virtue, when the decree is irrevocable: to complete the torments of Hell, nothing is wanting, but to make it the abode of a soul again awakened to sensibility! Our religion is not familiarized to us in poetry; and, among modern poets, Klopstock has known best how to

personify the spirituality of Christianity, by situations and pictures the most analogous to its nature.

There is but one episode which has love for its object in all the work; and this love subsists between two persons who have been raised from the dead, Cidli and Semida: Jesus Christ has restored them both to life, and they love each other with an affection pure and celestial as their new existence; they no longer consider themselves as subject to death; they hope to pass together from earth to heaven, and that neither of them will experience the anguish of approaching separation. What an affecting conception does such a love present to us in a religious poem! A love which could alone harmonize with the general tenour of the work. It must nevertheless be owned, that from a subject so continually and so highly exalted there results a little monotony; the soul is fatigued by too much contemplation, and the Author seems sometimes to require readers already risen from the grave, like Cidli and Semida.

This defect might, it seems to me, have been avoided, without introducing any thing

profane in the Messiah: it would perhaps have been better, to have taken the whole life of Jesus Christ for the subject of the poem, than to begin at the moment when his enemies demand his death. The colours of the east might with more art have been employed to paint Syria, and to characterize, in a strong manner, the state of the human race under the empire of Rome. There is too much discourse, and too many long conversations in the Messiah; eloquence itself is less striking to the imagination than a situation, a character, a picture, which leaves us something to guess at. The Logos, or the Divine Word, existed before the creation of the world; but with poets the creation ought to precede the Word.

Klopstock has also been reproached with not having sufficiently varied the portraits of his angels. It is true, that in perfection it is difficult to point out variety, and that in general men are characterized by defects alone: some distinguishing traits, however, might have been given to this great picture; but, above all, as it appears to me, ten cantos should not have been added to that which terminates the principal action,

which is the death of our Saviour. These ten cantos undoubtedly contain much lyrical beauty; but when a work, of whatever kind, excites dramatic interest, it ought to conclude whenever that interest ceases. Reflections and sentiments, which we should read elsewhere with the greatest pleasure, are most frequently tiresome when a more lively emotion has preceded them. We consider books, nearly as we would consider men: and we always exact from them what they have accustomed us to expect. Throughout all Klopstock's work we perceive a mind highly elevated and sensitive; nevertheless, the impressions which it excites are too uniform, and funeral ideas are too numerous. Life goes on, only because we forget death; and it is for that reason, without doubt, that we shudder whenever the idea of death recurs to us. In the Messiah, as well as in Young's Night-thoughts, we are too often brought back to the tomb: the arts would be entirely at an end, if we were always absorbed in that species of meditation; for we require a very energetic sentiment of existence, to enable us to look on the world with the

animation of poetry. The Pagans, in their poems, as well as on the bas-reliefs of their sepulchres, always represented varied pictures, and thus made even of death an action of life; but the profound and uncertain thoughts which accompany the Christian in his last moments, are more connected with the emotions of the heart than with the lively colours of the imagination.

Klopstock has composed religious and patriotic odes, with many other elegant productions on various subjects. In his religious odes, he knows how to invest unbounded ideas with visible imagery; but sometimes, this sort of poetry is lost in the immeasurable space which it attempts to embrace.

It is difficult to quote any particular verses in his religious odes which may be repeated as detached sentences. The beauty of his poetry consists in the general impression which it produces. Should we ask the man who contemplates the sea, that immense body of waters, which is always in motion, yet always inexhaustible—which seems to give an idea of all periods of time at once, of all its successions become si-

multaneous; should we ask him, while wave follows wave, to count the pleasures he experiences while ruminating on their progress? It is the same with religious meditations embellished by poetry; they are worthy of admiration if they inspire new zeal to attain higher degrees of perfection, if we feel ourselves the better for having indulged in them: and this is the criterion by which we should form our judgment of this species of composition.

Amongst the odes of Klopstock, those written on the French Revolution scarcely deserve to be mentioned; the present moment has no inspiration for the poet; he must place himself at a distance from the age in which he lives, in order either to judge or to describe it well: but the efforts made by Klopstock to revive patriotism amongst the Germans are highly honourable to him. From the poetry composed with this laudable intention, I will endeavour to give his song of the Bards after the death of Hermann, called by the Romans Arminius: he was assassinated by the Princes of Germany, who were jealous of his success and of his power.

Hermann, sung by the Bards, Werdomar, Kerding, and Darmond.

" W. On this rock, covered with aged " moss, let us seat ourselves, O bards! and " together sing the funeral hymn. Let none " approach more near, let none behold be- " neath these branches the spot where lies " the noblest of our country's sons.

" There he lies, extended in his blood; " he, the secret terror of the Romans, even " when with warlike dances, and songs of " triumph, they led his Thusnelda captive! " No, look not on him! who can behold " him without tears? and from the lyre no " plaintive sound should flow; it should " burst forth in strains of praise to his im- " mortal spirit.

" K. My head still bears the golden locks " of youth: this day beheld me first gird on " the sword, first saw these hands armed " with the lance and lyre. How then can I " sing Hermann.

" Expect not too much from youth, O " fathers! I will wipe with my golden locks " the tears which bathe my cheeks, before

" I attempt to sing the greatest of the sons " of Mana.*

" D. And I also, I shed tears; but they " are tears of rage. No, I will not restrain " them: flow, burning tears, tears of fury! ye " are not silent, ye call down vengeance on " perfidious warriors. O my friends! hear " my terrible malediction; may no traitor to " his country, may no assassin of the hero, " die in battle!

" W. Seest thou the torrent that springs " from the mountain and precipitates itself " on these rocks? In its impetuous course it " rolls down the uprooted pine; it comes, it " comes to form the funeral pile of Hermann. " The hero will soon be dust; soon will he " repose in his tomb of clay; but on that " sacred dust may the sword be placed, on " which he vowed destruction to the con- " queror.

" Stay awhile, O spirit of the dead! before " thou rejoinest thy father Siegmar. O stay " awhile, and behold how full of thee are the " hearts of thy people.

" K. Tell not, O tell not Thusnelda that

* Mana, one of the tutelary heroes of the Germanic Empire.

" her Hermann is here, that he lies bleed-
" ing; say not to that noble woman, to
" that despairing mother, that the father of
" her Thumeliko has ceased to live.

" Whosoever could speak it to her, who
" loaded with fetters has already walked
" before the formidable car of the proud
" conqueror; whoever could speak it to that
" unhappy being, he must have the heart of
" a Roman.

" D. Unhappy daughter, to what father
" owest thou thy being? Segestes,* a traitor,
" who in obscurity sharpened the homicidal
" steel. Oh! curse him not. Hela † has
" already marked him with her seal.

" W. Let not the crime of Segestes sully
" our songs; rather may eternal oblivion
" extend its heavy wings over his ashes: the
" chords of the lyre, which resound at the
" name of Hermann, would be profaned, if
" their vibrations accused the criminal. Her-
" mann! Hermann! thou, the favourite of
" noble hearts, the bravest of the brave, the
" saviour of thy country, in chorus our

* Author of the conspiracy in which Hermann perished.
† Hela, the goddess of hell.

" Bards repeat thy praises, to the gloomy
" echoes of our mysterious forests.

" Oh! battle of Winfeld!* bloody sister
" to the victory of Cannæ! I have beheld
" thee with scattered locks: an eye of fire
" and ensanguined hands appear amidst the
" harps of Walhalla; in vain the son of
" Drusus, to efface all traces of thy steps,
" would hide the whitened bones of the con-
" quered in the valley of death. We have
" not suffered it; we have destroyed their
" tombs, that their scattered remains may
" serve as a testimony to that great day: at
" the vernal feast, from age to age, they
" shall hear the joyful cries of the conquer-
" ors.

" More companions in death would our
" Hero have given to Varus: already, but
" for the jealous delay of the princes, had
" Cacina rejoined his chief.

" A thought, more noble yet, filled Her-
" mann's ardent soul; at midnight, near the
" altar of Thor,† in the midst of the sacri-

* The name given by the Germans to the battle which they gained against Varus.

† The god of war.

" fices, in secret, to himself he said, I will do
" it.

" This great design followed him even to
" your games, when the warlike youth form
" the dance, leap over the naked sword, and
" animate their pleasures with danger.

" The pilot, conquerer of the storm, re-
" lates, that in a distant isle * the burning
" mountain, long before it bursts, announces
" by black clouds of smoke the flame and
" terrible rocks that are about to issue from
" its bosom: thus the early battles of Her-
" mann presaged to us, that he would one
" day traverse the Alps, and descend into the
" plain of Rome.

" There the hero would have perished, or
" ascended to the Capitol, and near the throne
" of Jupiter, who in his hand holds the
" balance of the Fates, have interrogated
" Tiberius and the shades of his ancestors on
" the justice of their wars.

" But to accomplish his bold design, it
" behoved him to bear among all the princes
" the sword of the chief of battles; then did
" his rivals conspire his death, and now he

* Iceland.

" lives no longer, he, whose heart conceived
" the grand and patriotic thought.
" D. Ho! Héla, goddess of vengeance!
" hast thou gathered my falling tears? hast
" thou heard my furious accents?
" K. Behold, in Walhalla, under the
" sacred shades, in the midst of heroes, the
" palm of victory in his hand, Siegmar ad-
" vances to receive his Hermann: the old
" man restored to youth, salutes the young
" hero; but a cloud of melancholy obscures
" his reception; for now Hermann will not
" go—he cannot go—to the Capitol, to inter-
" rogate Tiberius before the tribunal of the
" Gods."

There are several other poems of Klopstock in which, as well as in this, he recalls to the Germans the noble deeds of their ancestors; but those recollections have scarcely any connexion with the present state of their nation. We perceive in these poems, a vague sort of enthusiasm, a desire which cannot obtain its object; and the slightest national song of a free people causes a truer emotion. Scarcely any traces of the ancient history of the Germans are now remaining, and that of modern times is too much divided, and too

confused, to be capable of producing popular sentiments; it is in their hearts alone that the Germans must discover the source of truly patriotic poetry.

Klopstock frequently treats subjects of a less serious nature in a very graceful manner; and this grace is derived from imagination and sensibility; for in his poetry there is not much of what we call wit, which indeed would not suit the lyric character. In his Ode to the Nightingale he has given novelty to a worn-out subject, by imparting to the bird sentiments so tender yet so animated, both on nature and on man, that it seems like a winged mediator, carrying from one to the other, the tribute of its love and praise. An Ode on Rhenish Wine is very original: the banks of the Rhine form a truly national image for the Germans; they have nothing in all their country superior to it. Vines grow in the same places that have given birth to so many warlike actions; and wine, a hundred years old, the contemporary of more glorious days, seems still to retain the generous warmth of former times.

Klopstock has not only drawn from Christianity the greatest beauties of his religious

works, but as it was his wish that the literature of his country should be entirely independant of that of the ancients, he has endeavoured to give to German poetry a perfectly new mythology borrowed from the Scandinavians. Sometimes he uses it in rather too learned a manner, but at others he applied it very happily; and his imagination seems to feel the relations which subsist between the gods of the north, and the aspect of the country over which they presided.

There is a very charming ode of his, entitled The Art of Tialf, in other words, The Art of Skaiting, invented it is said by the Giant Tialf. He describes a young and beautiful female clothed in furs, and placed on a sledge formed like a car; the young people, who surround it, by a slight push, drive it forwards with the rapidity of lightning. They choose for its path the frozen torrent, which during the winter offers the safest road. The locks of the young men are strewed over with shining particles of frost; the girls who follow the sledge fasten to their feet little wings of steel, which in a moment carry them to a considerable distance; the song of the bards accompanies this northern dance: the gay pro-

cession passes under elms covered with flowers of snow; the ice cracks under their feet, a momentary terror disturbs their enjoyment; but soon shouts of joy, and the violence of the exercise preserving that heat in the blood of which the cold air would otherwise deprive it, in short, the contest with the climate revives their spirits; and at the end of their course they reach a large illuminated hall, where a good fire, with a feast and ball, offer to their acceptance easy pleasures, instead of those which they had gained from their struggle with the rigours of nature.

The Ode on Departed Friends, addressed to Ebert, also deserves to be mentioned. Klopstock is less happy when he writes on the subject of love; like Dorat he addressed verses to "his future mistress," and his Muse was not inspired by so far fetched a subject; to sport with sentiment we should not have suffered from it, and when the attempt is made by a serious person, a secret constraint always prevents him from appearing natural. We must reckon as belonging to the school of Klopstock, not as his disciples but as members of his poetical fraternity, the great Haller, who cannot be mentioned without respect,

Gessner, and several others, who approached the English character with respect to truth of sentiment, and yet did not bear the truly characteristic stamp of German literature.

Klopstock himself did not entirely succeed in presenting to Germany an epic poem at once sublime and popular, as a work of that sort ought to be. Voss's translation of the Iliad and Odyssey, made Homer as much known as a sketched copy can render a finished original; every epithet is preserved, every word is in its proper place, and the impression made by the whole is forcible, although we do not find in the German all the charms of Greek, which was the finest language of the south. The men of literature in Germany, who seize with avidity every new kind of writing, endeavoured to compose poems after the manner of Homer; and the Odyssey, containing in itself many details of private life, appeared more easy to imitate than the Iliad.

The first essay of this kind was an Idyll in three cantos by Voss himself, entitled Louisa: it is written in hexameters, which are generally acknowledged to be admirable; but the pomp of hexameters seems seldom suitable to

the extreme naïveté of the subject. Were it not for the pure and religious emotions which animate the poem, we should interest ourselves but little in the very quiet marriage of the *venerable pastor of Grünau's* daughter. Homer, always just in the application of his epithets, constantly says, in speaking of Minerva, "the blue-eyed daughter of Jupiter;" in the same manner Voss incessantly repeats, "the "venerable pastor of Grünau," *(der ehrwürdige Pfarrer von Grünau.)* But the simplicity of Homer produces so great an effect, merely because it forms a noble contrast with the dignified grandeur of his hero and of the fate which pursues him; but when the subject treated of is merely a country pastor and a notable women, his wife, who marry their daughter to the man she loves, its simplicity has less merit. In Germany descriptions are greatly admired like those in Voss's Louisa on the manner of making coffee, of lighting a pipe, &c. and those details are given with much skill and exactness; it is a well painted Flemish picture; but it appears to me that the common customs of life cannot well be introduced into our poems, as they were in those of the ancients; for those customs

among us are not poetical, and our civilization has something citizen like in it. The ancients lived almost always in the open air, preserving their relations with nature: and their manner of existence was rural, but never vulgar.

The Germans consider the subject of a poem as of little consequence, and believe that every thing consists in the manner of treating it. Now this manner can scarcely ever be transfused into a foreign language, and yet the general reputation of Europe is not to be despised; besides, the remembrance of the most interesting details is soon effaced, when it is not connected with some fiction which the imagination can lay hold of. That affecting purity which constitutes the principal charm of Voss's poem is most conspicuous, as it appears to me, in the nuptial benediction of the pastor at the marriage of his daughter; addressing himself to her with a flattering voice he says, "My daughter, "may the blessing of God be with thee: "amiable and virtuous child, may the bless- "ing of God accompany thee both on earth "and in heaven. I have been young and "now am old; and in this uncertain life the

" Almighty has sent me much joy and much
" sorrow. May his holy name be blessed for
" both! I shall soon, without regret, lay
" my aged head in the tomb of my fathers,
" for my daughter is happy; she is so because
" she knows that our souls are equally the
" care of our Heavenly Father in sorrow as in
" joy. What can be more affecting than the
" sight of this young and beautiful bride!
" In the simplicity of her heart, she leans on
" the arm of the friend who is to conduct
" her through the path of life; it is with him
" that in a holy union she will partake of
" happiness and of misfortune; it is she who,
" if it be the will of God, will wipe the last
" cold sweat from the forehead of her dying
" husband. My soul was also filled with
" presentiments when, on my wedding day, I
" brought my timid companion to this place:
" happy, but serious, I showed her at a dis-
" tance the extent of our fields, the tower of
" the church and the pastor's house, in which
" we have experienced so much good and so
" much evil. My only child! for thou alone
" remainest, the others whom God had given
" to me sleep below under the church-yard
" turf; my only child, thou goest, following

" the path which led me hither. The cham-
" ber of my daughter will be deserted, her
" place at our table will be no longer occu-
" pied ; in vain shall I listen to hear her foot-
" steps, the sound of her voice. Yes, when
" thy husband takes thee far from me, sobs
" will escape me, and my eyes bathed in tears
" will long follow thee ; for I am a man and
" a father, and I love with tenderness this
" daughter who also loves me sincerely. But
" soon restraining my tears, I shall lift to hea-
" ven my supplicating hands, and prostrate
" myself before the divine will, which has
" commanded the wife to leave her father and
" mother, and follow her husband. Depart
" then in peace, my child ; forsake thy family
" and thy father's house ; follow the young
" man who henceforth must supply to thee
" the place of those who gave thee birth ; be
" in thy house like a fruitful vine, surround
" thy table with noble branches. A religious
" marriage is the purest of all earthly felicity ;
" but if the Lord found not the edifice, how
" vain are the labours of man!"

This is true simplicity, that of the soul ; that which is equally suitable to the monarch and to his people, to the poor and to the

rich, in short, to all the creatures of God. We are soon tired of descriptive poetry when it is applied to objects which have nothing great in themselves; but sentiments descend to us from heaven, and however humble be the abode which is penetrated with their rays, those rays lose nothing of their original beauty.

From the extensive admiration which Goëthe has acquired in Germany, his Hermann and Dorothea has obtained the name of an epic poem; and one of the most intelligent men of that or any other country, M. de Humboldt, the brother of the celebrated traveller, has composed a work on this subject, which contains several very philosophical and striking observations. Hermann and Dorothea is translated both into French and English, but we cannot in a translation have any idea of the charming effect produced by the original: from the first verse to the last, it excites a tender emotion, and there is also, in its minutest details, a natural dignity which would not be unsuitable to the heroes of Homer. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that the personages and events are of too little importance; the subject is sufficient to keep

up the interest when we read it in the original, but in a translation that interest is destroyed. With respect to epic poems, it appears to me allowable to establish a certain literary aristocracy: dignity, both of personages and of the historical recollections connected with them, can alone raise the imagination to a height equal to the composition of that species of poetry.

An ancient poem of the thirteenth century, *the Niebelungs*, of which I have already spoken, seems in its time to have possessed all the characters of the true epic. The great actions of the hero of northern Germany, Sigefroi, assassinated by a king of Burgundy, and the vengeance inflicted on that king in the camp of Attila by the followers of Sigefroi, which put an end to the first kingdom of Burgundy, are the subject of the work. An epic poem is scarcely ever the work of one man; ages, if we may be allowed the expression, must labour to perfect it; patriotism, religion, in short, the whole existence of a nation cannot be brought into action, but by some of those singularly-great events, which are not created by the poet, but which appear to him in greater magnitude seen

through the obscurity of time: the personages of an epic poem ought to represent the primitive character of their nation. We should discover in them that incorruptible mould, from which all history derives its origin.

The pride and boast of Germany were its ancient chivalry, its strength, its loyalty, the union of goodness and simplicity for which it was famed, and that northern roughness which was, however, connected with the most exalted sensibility. We also admire that Christianity which is grafted on the Scandinavian mythology; that untamed honour, rendered pure and sacred by faith; that respect for women, which became still more striking from the protection it afforded to the weak; that undaunted contempt of death, that warlike paradise which has now given place to the most humane of all religions. Such are the elements of an epic poem in Germany, of which genius should avail itself; and, with the art of Medea, bestow new vital powers on ancient recollections.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of German Poetry.

THE detached peices of poetry, among the Germans, are, it appears to me, still more remarkable than their poems, and it is particularly on that species of writing that the stamp of originality is impressed: it is also true that the authors who have written most in this manner, Goëthe, Schiller, Bürger, &c. are of the modern school, which alone bears a truly national character. Goëthe has most imagination, and Schiller most sensibility; but Bürger is more generally admired than either.

By successively examining some poetical pieces of each of these authors, we shall the better be able to form an idea of the

qualities which distinguish them. The productions of Schiller bear some analogy to the French taste, yet we do not find in his detached poems any thing that resembles the fugitive pieces of Voltaire; that elegance of conversation and almost of manners, transfused into French poetry, belongs to France alone; and Voltaire, in point of gracefulness, was the first of French writers. It would be interesting to compare Schiller's stanzas on the loss of youth, entitled the Ideal, with those of Voltaire, beginning,

Si vous voulez que j'aime encore,
Rendez moi l'age des amours, &c.

We see in the French poet the expression of pleasing regret, which has for its object the pleasures of love and the joys of life; the German poet laments the loss of that enthusiasm and innocent purity of thought, peculiar to early age, and flatters himself that his decline of life will still be embellished by the charms of poetry and of reflection. The stanzas of Schiller do not possess that easy and brilliant clearness which is generally so striking and attract-

ive; but we may draw from them consolations which intimately affect the soul. Schiller never presents to us a serious or profound reflection without investing it with noble images; he speaks to man, as nature herself would speak to him; for nature is also contemplative and poetical. To paint the idea of time, she brings before us an ever-flowing stream; and lest, through her eternal youth, we should forget our own transient existence, she adorns herself with flowers which quickly fade, and strips the trees in autumn of those leaves which spring beheld in all their beauty: poetry should be the terrestrial mirror of this divinity, and by colours, sounds, and rhythm, reflect all the beauties of the universe.

The poem, entitled the Bell, consists of two distinct parts: the alternate stanzas express the labour which is performed at a forge, and between each of these there are charming verses, on the solemn circumstances and extraordinary events commonly announced by the ringing of bells, such as birth, marriage, death, fire, insurrection, &c. We may translate into French the fine and affecting images which Schiller derives

from these great epochs of human life; but it is impossible properly to imitate the strophes in short verse, and composed of words, whose rough and quick sound almost conveys to our ears the repeated blows and rapid steps of the workmen who direct the boiling metal. Can a prose translation give any just idea of a poem of this sort? It is reading music instead of hearing it; and yet it is easier to conceive the effect of instruments which are known to us, than of the concords and contrasts of a rhythm and a language we are ignorant of. Sometimes the regular shortness of the metre gives us an idea of the activity of the workmen, the limited but regular force which they exert in their principal operations; and sometimes, immediately after this harsh and strong sound, we hear the aërial strains of enthusiasm and melancholy.

The originality of this poem is lost, if we separate it from the effect of a versification skilfully chosen, where the rhymes answer each other like intelligent echoes modified by thought; and nevertheless, these picturesque effects of sound would be bold and hazardous in French. The vulgarity in point

of style continually threatens us: we have not, like almost every other nation, two languages, that of prose and that of verse; and it is with words as with persons, wherever ranks are confounded familiarity is dangerous. Cassandra, another work of Schiller's, might more easily be translated into French, although its poetical language is extremely bold. At the moment when the festival to celebrate the marriage of Polyxena and Achilles is beginning, Cassandra is seized with a presentiment of the misfortunes which will result from it; she walks sad and melancholy in the grove of Apollo, and laments that knowledge of futurity which troubles all her enjoyments. We see in this ode what a misfortune it would be to a human being, could he possess the prescience of a divinity. Is not the sorrow of the prophetess experienced by all persons of strong passions and superior minds? Schiller has given us a fine moral idea under a very poetical form, namely, that true genius, that of sentiment, even if it escape suffering from its commerce with the world, is frequently the victim of its own feelings. Cassandra never marries,

not that she is either insensible or rejected; but her penetrating soul in a moment passes the boundaries of life and death, and finds repose only in heaven.

I should never end if I were to mention all the poetical pieces of Schiller which contain new thoughts and new beauties. He has composed a hymn on the departure of the Greeks after the seige of Troy, which might be supposed the production of a poet then living, so faithfully has he adhered to the complexion of those times. I shall examine, under the subject of dramatic art, the admirable skill with which the Germans transport themselves into ages, countries, and characters, different from their own: a superior faculty, without which the personages produced on the stage would resemble puppets moved by the same wire, and made to speak in the same voice, namely, that of the author. Schiller deserves particularly to be admired as a dramatic poet: Goëthe stands unrivalled in the art of composing elegies, ballads, stanzas, &c. his detached pieces have a very different merit from those of Voltaire. The French poet has transfused into his verse the spirit of

the most brilliant society; the German, by a few slight touches, awakens in the soul profound and contemplative impressions.

Goëthe is to the highest degree natural in this species of composition; and not only so when he speaks from his own impressions, but even when he transports himself to new climates, customs, and situations, his poetry easily assimilates itself with foreign countries; he seizes, with a talent perfectly unique, all that pleases in the national songs of each nation; he becomes, when he chooses it, a Greek, an Indian, or a Morlachian. We have often mentioned that melancholy and meditation which characterizes the poets of the north: Goëthe, like all other men of genius, unites in himself most astonishing contrast; we find in his works many traces of character peculiar to the inhabitants of the south; they are more awakened to the pleasures of existence, and have at once a more lively and tranquil enjoyment of nature than those of the north; their minds have not less depth, but their genius has more vivacity; we find in it a certain sort of naïveté, which awakens at once the remembrance of ancient sim-

plicity with that of the middle ages: it is not the naïveté of innocence, but that of strength. We perceive in Goëthe's poetical compositions, that he disdains the crowd of obstacles, criticisms, and observations, which may be opposed to him. He follows his imagination wherever it leads him, and a certain predominant pride frees him from the scruples of self-love. Goëthe is in poetry an absolute master of nature, and most admirable when he does not finish his pictures; for all his sketches contain the germ of a fine fiction, but his finished fictions do not always equally convey the idea of a good sketch.

In his elegies, composed at Rome, we must not look for descriptions of Italy; Goëthe scarcely does whatever is expected from him, and when there is any thing pompous in an idea it displeases him: he wishes to produce effect by an untrodden path hitherto unknown both to himself and to the reader. His elegies describe the effect of Italy on his whole existence, that delirium of happiness resulting from the influence of a serene and beautiful sky. He relates his pleasures, even of the most common kind, in the manner of Propertius; and from time to time some fine

recollections of that city, which was once the mistress of the world, give an impulse to the imagination, the more lively because it was not prepared for it.

He relates, that he once met in the Campania of Rome a young women suckling her child and seated on the remains of an ancient column; he wished to question her on the subject of the ruins with which her hut was surrounded; but she was ignorant of every thing concerning them, wholly devoted to the affections which filled her soul; she loved, and to her the present moment was the whole of existence.

We read in a Greek author, that a young girl, skilful in the art of making nosegays of flowers, entered into a contest with her lover, Pausias, who knew how to paint them Goëthe has composed a charming idyl on that subject. The author of that idyl is also the author of Werther. Goëthe has run through all the shades and gradations of love, from the sentiment which confers grace and tenderness, to that despair which harrows up the soul, but exalts genius. After having made himself a Greek in Pausias, Goëthe conducts us to Asia in a most charming ballad,

called the Bayadere. An Indian deity (Mahadoch) clothes himself in a mortal form, in order to judge of the pleasures and pains of men from his own experience. He travels through Asia, observes both the great and the lower classes of people; and as one evening, or leaving a town, he was walking on the banks of the Ganges, he is stopped by a Bayadere, who persuades him to rest himself in her habitation. There is so much poetry, colours so truly oriental in his manner of painting the dances of this Bayadere, the perfumes and flowers with which she is surrounded, that we cannot, from our own manners, judge of a picture so perfectly foreign to them. The Indian deity inspires this erring female with true love, and touched with that return towards virtue which sincere affection should always inspire, he resolves to purify the soul of the Bayadere by the trials of misfortune.

When she awakes, she finds her lover dead by her side: the priests of Brama carry off the lifeless body to consume it on the funeral pile: the Bayadere endeavours to throw herself on it with him she loves, but is repulsed by the priests, because, not being his wife, she

has no right to die with him. After having felt all the anguish of love and of shame, she throws herself on the pile, in spite of the Bramins. The god receives her in his arms; he darts through the flames, and carries the object of his tenderness, now rendered worthy of his choice, with him to heaven.

Zelter, an original musician, has set this romance to an air, by turns voluptuous and solemn, which suits the words extremely well. When we hear it, we think ourselves in India, surrounded with all its wonders; and let it not be said, that a ballad is too short a poem to produce such an effect. The first notes of an air, the first verse of a poem, transports the imagination to any distant age or country; but, if a few words are thus powerful, a few words can also destroy the enchantment. Magicians formerly could perform or prevent prodigies by the help of a few magical words. It is the same with the poet: he may call up the past, or make the present appear again, according as the expressions he makes use of are, or are not, conformable to the time, or country, which is the subject of his verse—according as he observes or neglects local colouring, and those little circumstances so

ingeniously invented, which, both in fiction and reality, exercise the mind in the endeavour to discover truth where it is not specifically pointed out to us.

Another ballad of Goëthe's produces a delightful effect by the most simple means: it is "The Fisherman." A poor man, on a summer's evening, seats himself on the bank of a river, and as he throws in his line, contemplates the clear and limpid tide, which gently flows and bathes his naked feet. The nymph of the stream invites him to plunge himself into it; she describes to him the delightful freshness of the water during the heat of summer, the pleasure which the sun takes in cooling itself at night in the sea, the calmness of the moon when its rays repose and sleep on the bosom of the stream: at length, the fisherman attracted, seduced, drawn on, advances near the nymph, and for ever disappears. The story on which this ballad is founded, is trifling; but what is delightful in it is, the art of making us feel the mysterious power which may proceed from the phenomena of nature. It is said there are persons who discover springs, hidden under the earth, by the nervous agitation which they

cause in them: in German poetry, we often think we discover that miraculous sympathy between man and the elements. The German poet comprehends nature not only as a poet, but as a brother; and we might almost say, that the bonds of family union connect him with the air, the water, flowers, trees—in short, all the primary beauties of the creation.

There is no one who has not felt the undefinable attraction which we experience when looking on the waves of the sea, whether from the charm of their freshness, or from the ascendancy which an uniform and perpetual motion insensibly acquires over our transient and perishable existence. This ballad of Goëthe's admirably expresses the increasing pleasure we derive from contemplating the pure waters of a flowing stream: the measure of the rhythm and harmony is made to imitate the motion of the waves, and produces an analogous effect on the imagination. The soul of nature discovers itself to us in every place, and under a thousand different forms. The fruitful country and the unpeopled desert, the sea as well as the stars, are all subjected to the same laws; and man con-

tains within himself sensations and occult powers, which correspond with the day, with the night, and with the storm; it is this secret alliance of our being with the wonders of the universe, which gives to poetry its true grandeur. The poet knows how to restore the union between the natural and the moral world: his imagination forms a connecting tie between the one and the other. There is much gaiety in several of Goëthe's pieces; but we seldom find in them that sort of pleasantry to which we have been accustomed: he is sooner struck by the imagery of nature, than by ridiculous circumstances; with a singular instinct, he points out the originality of animals, always new, yet never varying. "The Menagerie of Lily," and "The "Wedding Song in the Old Castle," describe animals, not like men, in La Fontaine's manner; but, like fantastic creatures, the sports of Nature. Göethe also finds in the marvellous a source of pleasantry, the more gratifying, because we discover in it no serious aim. A song, entitled "The Pupil of the Sorcerer," also deserves to be mentioned. The pupil of a sorcerer having heard his master mutter some magical words, by the help of which he

gets a broomstick to tend on him, recollects those words, and commands the broomstick to go and fetch him water from the river, to wash his house. The broomstick sets off and returns, brings one bucket, then another, and then another, and so on without ceasing. The pupil wants to stop it, but he has forgot the words necessary for that purpose: the broomstick, faithful to its office, still goes to the river, and still draws up water, which is thrown on the house at the risk of inundating it. The pupil, in his fury, takes an axe and cuts the broomstick in two; the two parts of the stick then become two servants instead of one, and go for water, which they throw into the apartments, as if in emulation of each other, with more zeal than ever. In vain the pupil scolds these stupid sticks; they continue their business without ceasing, and the house would have been lost, had not the master arrived in time to assist his pupil, at the same time laughing heartily at his ridiculous presumption. An awkward imitation of the great secrets of art is very well depicted in this little scene.

We have not yet spoken of an inexhaust-

ible source of poetical effect in Germany, which is terror; stories of apparitions and sorcerers are equally well received by the populace and by men of more enlightened minds: it is a relick of the northern mythology; a disposition naturally inspired by the long nights of a northern climate: and besides, though Christianity opposes all groundless fears, yet popular superstitions have always some sort of analogy to the prevailing religion. Almost every true opinion has its attendant error, which like a shadow, places itself at the side of the reality: it is a luxuriance or excess of belief, which is commonly attached both to religion and to history, and I know not why we should disdain to avail ourselves of it. Shakspeare has produced wonderful effects from the introduction of spectres and magic; and poetry cannot be popular when it despises that which exercises a spontaneous empire over the imagination. Genius and taste may preside over the arrangement of these tales, and in proportion to the commonness of the subject, the more skill is required in the manner of treating it: perhaps it is in this union alone that the great

force of a poem consists. It is probable that the great events recorded in the Iliad and Odyssey were sung by nurses, before Homer rendered them them chef-d'œuvres of the poetical art.

Of all German writers, Bürger has made the best use of this vein of superstition which carries us so far into the recesses of the heart. His tales are therefore well known throughout Germany. Leonora, which is most generally admired, is not, I believe, translated into French, or at least, it would be very difficult to relate it circumstantially either in our prose or verse. A young girl is alarmed at not hearing from her lover who is gone to the army; peace is made, and the soldiers return to their habitations. Mothers again meet their sons, sisters their brothers, and husbands their wives; the warlike trumpet accompanies the songs of peace, and joy reigns in every heart. Leonora in vain surveys the ranks of the soldiers, she sees not her lover, and no one can tell her what is become of him. She is in despair: her mother attempts to calm her; but the youthful heart of Leonora revolts against the stroke of affliction, and

in its frenzy she accuses Providence. From the moment in which the blasphemy is uttered, we are sensible that the story is to have something fatal in it, and this idea keeps the mind in constant agitation.

At midnight, a knight stops at the door of Leonora's house; she hears the neighing of the horse and the clinking of the spurs; the knight knocks, she goes down and beholds her lover. He tells her to follow him instantly, having not a moment to lose, he says, before he returns to the army. She presses forward; he places her behind him on his horse, and sets off with the quickness of lightning. During the night he gallops through barren and desert countries; his youthful companion is filled with terror, and continually asks him why he goes so fast; the knight still presses on his horse by his hoarse and hollow cries, and in a low voice says, "The dead go quick, the "dead go quick;" Leonora answers, "Ah! "leave the dead in peace!" but whenever she addresses to him any anxious question, he repeats the same appalling words.

In approaching the church, where he says he is carrying her to complete their union,

the frosts of winter seem to change nature herself into a frightful omen: priests carry a coffin in great pomp, and their black robes train slowly on the snow, the winding-sheet of the earth; Leonora's terror increases, and her lover cheers her with a mixture of irony and carelessness which makes one shudder. All that he says is pronounced with a monotonous precipitation, as if already, in his language, the accents of life were no longer heard: he promises to bring her to that narrow and silent abode where their union was to be accomplished. We see, at a distance, the church-yard by the side of the church: the knight knocks, and the door opens; he pushes forward with his horse, making him pass between the tombstones; he then, by degrees, loses the appearance of a living being, is changed to a skeleton, and the earth opens to swallow up both him and his mistress.

I certainly do not flatter myself that I have been able, in this abridged recital, to give a just idea of the astonishing merit of this tale; all the imagery, all the sounds connected with the situation of the soul, are

wonderfully expressed by the poetry; the syllables, the rhymes, all the art of language is employed to excite terror. The rapidity of the horse's pace seems more solemn and more appalling than even the slowness of a funeral procession. The energy with which the knight quickens his course, that petulance of death, causes an inexpressible emotion; and we feel ourselves carried off by the phantom, as well as the poor girl whom he drags with him into the abyss.

There are four English translations of this tale of Leonora, but the best beyond comparison is that of Wm. Spencer, who of all English poets is best acquainted with the true spirit of foreign languages. The analogy between the English and German allows a complete transfusion of the originality of style and versification of Bürger; and we not only find in the translation the same ideas as in the original, but also the same sensations; and nothing is more necessary than this to convey the true knowledge of a literary production. It would be difficult to obtain the same result in French, where nothing strange or odd seems natural.

Bürger has written another story, less ce-

lebrated, but also extremely original, entitled "The Wild Huntsman." Followed by his servants and a large pack of hounds, he sets out for the chase on a Sunday, just as the village bell announces divine service. A knight, in white armour, presents himself, and conjures him not to profane the Lord's day; another knight, arrayed in black armour, makes him ashamed of subjecting himself to prejudices, which are suitable only to old men and children: the huntsman yields to these evil suggestions; he sets off, and reaches the field of a poor widow: she throws herself at his feet, imploring him not to destroy her harvest by trampling down her corn with his attendants: the knight in white armour entreats the huntsman to listen to the voice of pity; the black knight laughs at a sentiment so puerile; the huntsman mistakes ferocity for energy, and his horses trample on the hope of the poor and the orphan. At length the stag, pursued, seeks refuge in the hut of an old hermit; the huntsman wishes to set it on fire in order to drive out his prey; the hermit embraces his knees, and endeavours to soften the ferocious being who thus threatens his humble

abode: for the last time, the good genius, under the form of the white knight, again speaks to him: the evil genius, under that of the black knight, triumphs; the huntsman kills the hermit, and is at once changed into a phantom, pursued by his own dogs, who seek to devour him. This story is derived from a popular superstition: it is said, that at midnight, in certain seasons of the year, a huntsman is seen in the clouds, just over the forest where this event is supposed to have passed, and that he is pursued by a furious pack of hounds till day-break.

What is truly fine in this poem of Bürger's is his description of the ardent will of the huntsman: it was at first innocent, as are all the faculties of the soul; but it becomes more and more depraved, as often as he resists the voice of conscience and yields to his passions. His headstrong purpose was at first only the intoxication of power; it soon becomes that of guilt, and the earth can no longer sustain him. The good and evil inclinations of men are well characterized by the white and black knights; the words, always the same, which are pronounced by the white knight to stop the

the career of the huntsman, are also very ingeniously combined. The ancients, and the poets of the middle ages, were well acquainted with the kind of terror caused in certain circumstances by the repetition of the same words; it seems to awaken the sentiment of inflexible necessity. Apparitions, oracles—all supernatural powers must be monotonous: what is immutable is uniform; and in certain fictions it is a great art to imitate by words that solemn fixedness which imagination assigns to the empire of darkness and of death.

We also remark in Bürger a certain familiarity of expression, which does not lessen the dignity of the poetry, but, on the contrary, singularly increases its effect. When we succeed in exciting both terror and admiration without weakening either, each of those sentiments is necessarily strengthened by the union: it is mixing, in the art of painting, what we see continually with that which we never see; and from what we know, we are led to believe that which astonishes us.

Goëthe has also made trial of his talents in those subjects which are at the same time

terrifying both to children and men; but he has treated them with a depth of thought that leaves us also a wide field for reflection. I will endeavour to give an account of one of his poems on apparitions which is the most admired in Germany; it is called "The Bride of Corinth." I certainly do not mean in any respect to defend this fiction, either as considered in itself, or in its tendency: but it seems to me scarcely possible not to be struck with the warmth of imagination which it indicates.

Two friends, one of Athens and the other of Corinth, had resolved to unite their son and daughter to each other. The young man sets out for Corinth to see her who had been promised to him, and whom he had never yet beheld: it was at the time when Christianity was first established. The family of the Athenian adhered to the old religion, but that of the Corinthian had adopted the new mode of faith; and the mother, during a lingering illness, had devoted her daughter to the altar. The youngest sister is destined to fill the place of the eldest, who is thus consecrated to religion.

The young man arrives late at the house; all the family had retired to rest: the servants

bring some supper to his apartment, and leave him alone; but he is soon afterwards joined by a very singular guest: he sees, advancing to the middle of the room, a young girl clothed in a veil and a white robe, her forehead bound with a black and gold ribbon; and when she perceives the young man she draws back with timidity, and, lifting her white hands to heaven, cries out, "Alas! am I already become such a "stranger in this house, that in the narrow "cell to which I am confined I am left igno- "rant of the arrival of a new guest?"

She attempts to retire, but the young man holds her back; he learns that she is the person who was destined to be his wife. Their fathers had sworn to unite them, and therefore every other vow appeared to him without effect. "Remain, my love, remain," said he, "and be no longer so pale with "terror; partake with me in the gifts of "Ceres and Bacchus; Love accompanies thee, "and soon we shall experience how favourable "are our gods to pleasure." The young man conjures his youthful companion to yield herself to his wishes. "I no longer belong "to joy," replies she; "the last step is taken; "the brilliant company of our gods has

" disappeared, and in this silent house they
" adore only an invisible being residing in
" the heavens, and a God dying on the cross.
" No longer here do they sacrifice bulls or
" sheep; but they have chosen me as a
" human victim; my youth and nature her-
" self have been immolated on their altars.
" Get thee from hence, young man, O fly!
" White as the snow, and as frozen, is the
" unfortunate being whom thou hast chosen
" as mistress of thy heart."

At midnight, which is called the hour of spectres, the young girl seems more unconstrained; she eagerly drinks wine of the colour of blood, like that which is taken by the ghosts in the Odyssey to renew their lost memory; but she obstinately refuses to taste a bit of bread: she gives a chain of gold to him whom she was to have married, and asks in return a lock of his hair: the young man, charmed with the beauty of his companion, presses her with transport in his arms, but he feels no heart beat responsive against his bosom; her limbs are frozen. "I care not," cries he, "for I would re-animate thee even if
" thou wast sent to me from the grave." And then begins a scene as extraordinary as the

frenzied imagination can possibly conceive: a mixture of love and terror, a formidable union of life and death. There is, as it were, a funeral voluptuousness in this picture where love forms an alliance with the grave, where beauty itself seems only a terrifying apparition.

At length the mother arrives, and convinced that one of her slaves has been introduced to the stranger, she gives way to her just indignation; but immediately the young girl increases in size, till like a shadow she reaches the vaulted ceiling, and then reproaches her mother with having caused her death by obliging her to take the veil: "Oh! mother, mother," cries she, with a hollow voice, "why do you disturb this "hymeneal night? is it not enough that "young as I was, you had me covered with "a winding sheet and carried to the tomb? "A fatal malediction has expelled me from "my cold habitation: the hymns murmured "by your priests have not relieved my "heart; the salt and water have not ap-"peased my youth: Ah! the earth itself "has not power to cool the ardour of love. "This young man was promised to me when

" the peaceful temple of Venus was not
" overthrown. Ah! mother, ought you to
" have broken your word to fulfil insensate
" vows? No god listened to you when you
" swore to prevent the espousals of your
" daughter. And thou, beloved young man,
" thy life draws near its close; thou wilt
" languish on the spot where thou receivedst
" my chain, where I took a lock of thy
" hair; to-morrow thy hair will become grey,
" and thou wilt recover thy youth only by
" entering the region of departed spirits.

" Oh, mother! listen at least to the last
" prayer which I address to thee: order a
" funeral pile to be prepared; open the
" narrow coffin which encloses me; bring the
" lovers to their repose through surrounding
" flames; and when the sparkling fire shall
" ascend and the ashes shall burn, we will
" hasten together, and rejoin our ancient
" gods."

Without doubt, a pure and chastened taste will find many things to blame in this piece; but when it is read in the original, it is impossible not to admire the art with which every word is made to produce an increas-

ing degree of terror; every word indicates, without explaining, the astonishing horror of this situation. A history, of which nothing in nature could have given the idea, is related in striking and natural details, as if the subject of it had really taken place; and curiosity is constantly excited without our being willing to sacrifice a single circumstance, in order to satisfy it the sooner.

This piece, nevertheless, is the only one amongst the detached poems of celebrated German authors, against which French taste can find any thing to object: in all the others the two nations appear to agree. In the verses of Jacobi we almost discover the brilliancy and lightness of Gresset. Matthissen has given to descriptive poetry (the features of which are frequently too vague) the character of a picture as striking in its colouring as in its resemblance. The charm which pervades the poetry of Salis makes us love its author as if he were our friend. Tiedge is a moral poet, whose writings lead the soul to the purest devotional feelings. We should still, in short, have to mention a crowd of other poets, if it were possible to

point out every name deserving of applause, in a country where poetry is so natural to all cultivated minds.

A. W. Schlegel, whose literary opinions have made so much noise in Germany, has not, in any of his poems, allowed himself the slightest expression which can attract censure from the most severe taste. His elegies on the death of a young person; his stanzas on the union of the church with the fine arts; his elegy on Rome, are written throughout with delicacy and dignity. The two specimens I am about to give of his poetry will convey but a very imperfect idea of it; but they will serve, at least, to render the character of the poet better known. The sonnet, entitled "Attachment to the World," appears to me charming.

"The soul, invigorated by the contem-
"plation of divine subjects, often endeavours
"to spread out her wings towards heaven.
"In the narrow circle which she traverses,
"her activity seems vain, and her know-
"ledge an illusion; an invincible desire
"presses her to rush forwards towards
"more elevated regions, and spheres more

" unconfined: at the end of her career she
" believes that a curtain will be withdrawn,
" which will discover to her, scenes of ever-
" lasting light: but when death really ap-
" proaches her perishable tenement, she
" casts a backward glance on terrestrial plea-
" sures and on her mortal companions. It
" was thus in former times, when Proserpine
" was carried off in the arms of Pluto, far
" from the meadows of Sicily, that, childish
" in her complaints, she wept for the flowers
" which fell from her bosom."

The following copy of verses must lose even more by a translation than the sonnet; it is called "The Melodies of Life:" the swan is placed in opposition to the eagle; the former as the emblem of contemplative existence, the latter as the image of active existence; the rhythm of the verse changes when the swan speaks, and when the eagle answers her; and the strains of both are nevertheless comprised in the same stanza united by the rhyme; the true beauties of harmony are also found in this piece, not imitative harmony, but the internal music of the soul. Our emotion discovers it with-

out having recourse to reflection; and reflecting genius converts it into poetry.

"*The Swan.*—'My tranquil life is passed "in the waters, it traces on them only the "slight furrow which is soon lost in the "distance; while the wave, scarcely agitated, "like a pure mirror, reflects my image without impairing it.'

"*The Eagle.*—'The pointed rock is my "abode, I skim through the air in the midst "of the storm; in the chase, in battle, and "in dangers, I trust to the boldness of my "flight.'

"*The Swan.*—'The bright azure of a "serene sky delights me; the perfume of "plants gently attracts me to the shore, "when, at the setting of the sun, I poise "my white wings over the purple waves.'

"*The Eagle.*—'I triumph in the tempest when it roots up the oaks of the forest, "and I ask the thunder whether it takes "pleasure in destruction.'

"*The Swan.*—'Invited by a glance from "Apollo, I also venture to bathe myself in "the tide of harmony; and reposing at his "feet, I listen to the songs which resound "through the valley of Tempé.'

" *The Eagle.*—' I reside even on the throne " of Jupiter; at his nod, I go to fetch him " the thunder-bolt; and, while I sleep, my " heavy wings cover the sceptre of the sove- " reign of the universe.'

" *The Swan.*—' My prophetic sight often " contemplates the stars, and the azure firm- " ament, which is reflected on the stream; " and the tenderest regret recalls me towards " my own country, in the celestial re- " gions.'

" *The Eagle.*—' From my earliest years, " it was with rapture that, in my flight, I " fixed my steadfast gaze on the immortal " sun. I cannot descend to the dust of this " terrestrial globe; I feel myself a fit com- " panion of the gods.'

" *The Swan.*—' A peaceful and gentle life " yields willingly to the stroke of death; " when it comes to disengage me from my " bonds, and to restore to my voice its na- " tive melody, with my latest breath my " songs shall celebrate that solemn mo- " ment.'

" *The Eagle.*—' The soul, like a brilliant " phœnix, rises from the funeral pile, free " and unveiled; it embraces its divine

" destiny; the torch of death renews its " youth.' "*

It is a circumstance worthy of observation, that national taste in general differs much more in the dramatic art than in any other branch of literature. We will analyse the causes of this difference in the following chapters; but before we enter on the examination of the German theatre, some general observations on taste appear to me necessary. I shall not consider it abstractedly as an intellectual faculty: several writers, and Montesquieu in particular, have exhausted that subject. I will only point out why literary taste is understood in so different a manner by the French and the nations of Germany.

* Amongst the ancients, an eagle rising from the funeral pile was an emblem of the immortality of the soul, and not unfrequently also that of deification.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of Taste.

THOSE who think themselves in possession of taste are more proud of it than those who believe that they possess genius. Taste is in literature what the *bon ton* is in society; we consider it as a proof of fortune and of birth, or at least of the habits which are found in connexion with them; while genius may spring from the head of an artisan, who has never had any intercourse with good company. In every country where there is vanity, taste will be placed in the highest rank of qualifications, because it separates different classes, and serves as a rallying point to all the individuals of the first class. In every country where the power of ridi-

cule is felt, taste will be reckoned as one of the first advantages; for, above all things, it teaches us what we ought to avoid. A sense of the fitness of things, and of propriety, peculiarly belongs to taste; and it is an excellent armour to ward off the blows of the various contending kinds of self-love, which we have to deal with; in short, it may so happen, that a whole nation shall, with respect to other nations, form itself into an aristocracy of good taste; and this may be applied to France, where the spirit of society reigned in so eminent a manner, that it had some excuse for such a pretension.

But taste, in its application to the fine arts, differs extremely from taste as applied to the relations of social life; when the object is to force men to grant us a reputation, ephemeral as our own lives, what we omit doing is at least as necessary as what we do; for the higher orders of society are naturally so hostile to all pretension, that very extraordinary advantages are requisite to compensate that of not giving occasion to the world to speak about us. Taste in poetry depends on nature, and, like nature, should be creative; the principles

of this taste are therefore quite different from those which depend on our social relations.

It is by confounding these two kinds of taste that we find such opposite judgments formed on subjects of literature; the French judge of the fine arts by the rules of social fitness and propriety, and the Germans judge of these as they would of the fine arts: in the relations of society we must study how to defend ourselves, but in those of poetry, we should yield ourselves up without reserve. If you consider surrounding objects as a man of the world, you will not be sensible to the charms of nature; if you survey them as an artist, you will lose that delicate and discriminating feeling which society alone can give. If we are to subject the arts to the regulations of good company, the French alone are truly capable of it; but greater latitude of composition is necessary, in order strongly to affect the imagination and the soul. I know it may be objected to me, and with reason, that our three best dramatic authors are elevated to the most sublime height, without offending any established rule. Some men of genius, reaping a field before un-

cultured, have indeed rendered themselves illustrious in spite of the difficulties they had to conquer; but is not the cessation of all progress in the art, since that time, a strong proof that there are too many obstacles in the road which they followed?

"Good taste in literature is in some re-
"spects like order under despotism; it is
"of consequence that we should know at
"what price we purchase it."* In a political point of view, Mr. Necker said, The utmost degree of liberty should be granted which is consistent with order. I would change the maxim, by saying that in literature we should have all the taste which is consistent with genius: for if in a state of society the chief object be order and quietness, that which is of most importance in literature is, on the contrary, interest, curiosity, and that sort of emotion which taste alone would frequently disapprove.

A treaty of peace might be proposed between the different modes of judgment adopted by artists and men of the world, by Germans and Frenchmen. The French

* Suppressed by authority.

ought to abstain from condemning even a violation of rule, if an energetic thought or a true sentiment can be pleaded in its excuse. The Germans ought to prohibit all that is offensive to natural taste—all that retraces images repulsive to our feelings: no philosophical theory, however ingenious it may be, can compensate for this defect; as, on the contrary, no established rule in literature can prevent the effect of involuntary emotions. In vain do the most intelligent German writers contend, that, in order to understand the conduct of Lear's daughters towards their father, it is necessary to shew the barbarity of the times in which they lived; and, therefore, tolerate the action of the Duke of Cornwall, who, excited by Regan, treads out the eye of Gloucester with his heel on the stage: our imaginations will always revolt at such a sight, and will demand other means of attaining the great beauties of composition. But, were the French to direct the utmost force of their literary criticisms against the prediction of the witches in Macbeth, the ghost of Banquo, &c. we should not the less feel, with the most lively

emotion, the terrific effect which it is their endeavour to proscribe.

We cannot teach good taste in the arts as we can *bon ton* in society; for the knowledge of *bon ton* assists us to hide the points in which we fail, while in the arts it is above all things necessary to possess a creative spirit: good taste cannot supply the place of genius in literature, for the best proof of taste, when there is no genius, would be, not to write at all. If we dared to speak our opinion on this subject, perhaps we should say, that in France there are too many curbs for coursers that have so little mettle, and that in Germany great literary independence has not yet produced effects proportionably striking and brilliant.

END OF VOL. I.

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